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by Robert
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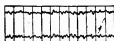
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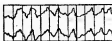
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COVER BY EMSH

Illustrations by Emsch, Freas and Orban

SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, January, 1956, published bi-monthly by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass., under the act of March 3, 1879. Entire contents copyright 1956 by Columbia Publications, Inc. 35¢ per copy; yearly subscriptions \$2.10. Printed in the U. S. A.

The machine was much too complicated to have been built simply to murder one man. But, then, what was its full purpose?

THE UNRECONSTRUCTED M

NOVELET

by PHILIP K. DICK

(author of "Vulcan's Hammer")

illustrated by FREAS

THE MACHINE was a foot wide and two feet long; it looked like an oversized box of crackers. Silently, with great caution, it climbed the side of a concrete building; it had lowered two rubberized rollers and was now beginning the first phase of its job.

From its rear, a flake of blue enamel was exuded. The machine pressed the flake firmly against the rough concrete and then continued on. Its upward path carried it from vertical concrete to vertical steel: it had reached a

window. The machine paused and produced a microscopic fragment of cloth fabric. The cloth, with great care, was embedded in the fitting of the steel window frame.

In the chill darkness, the machine was virtually invisible. The glow of a distant tangle of traffic briefly touched it, illuminated its polished hull, and departed. The machine resumed its work.

It projected a plastic pseudopodium and incinerated the pane of window glass. There was no response from



The machine was destroying all the evidence...

within the gloomy apartment: nobody was home. The machine, now dulled with particles of glass-dust, crept over the steel frame and raised an inquisitive receptor.

While it received, it exerted precisely two hundred pounds pressure on the steel window frame, the frame obediently bent. Satisfied, the machine descended the inside of the wall to the moderately thick carpet. There it began the second phase of its job.

ONE SINGLE human hair — follicle and speck of scalp included — was deposited on the hardwood floor by the lamp. Not far from the piano, two dried grains of tobacco were ceremoniously laid out. The machine waited an interval of ten seconds and then, as an internal section of magnetic tape clicked into place, it suddenly said. "Ugh! Damn it..."

Curiously, its voice was husky and masculine.

The machine made its way to the closet door, which was locked. Climbing the wood surface, the machine reached the lock mechanism, and, inserting a thin section of itself, caressed the tumblers back. Behind the row of coats was a small mound of batteries and wires: a self-

powered video recorder. The machine destroyed the reservoir of film—which was vital—and then, as it left the closet, expelled a drop of blood on the jagged tangle that had been the lens-scanner. The drop of blood was even more vital.

While the machine was pressing the artificial outline of a heel mark into the greasy film that covered the flooring of the closet, a sharp sound came from the hallway. The machine ceased its work and became rigid. A moment later a small, middle-aged man entered the apartment, coat over one arm, briefcase in the other.

"Good God," he said, stopping instantly as he saw the machine. "What are you?"

THE MACHINE lifted the nozzle of its front section and shot an explosive pellet at the man's half-bald head. The pellet traveled into the skull and detonated. Still clutching his coat and briefcase, a bewildered expression on his face, the man collapsed to the rug. His glasses, broken, lay twisted beside his ear. His body stirred a little, twitched, and then was satisfactorily quiet.

Only two steps remained to the job, now that the main part was done. The machine

deposited a bit of burnt match in one of the spotless ashtrays resting on the mantel, and entered the kitchen to search for a water glass. It was starting up the side of the sink when the noise of human voices startled it.

"This is the apartment," a voice said, clear and close.

"Get ready—he ought to still be here." Another voice, a man's voice, like the first. The hall door was pushed open and two individuals in heavy overcoats sprinted purposefully into the apartment. At their approach, the machine dropped to the kitchen floor, the water glass forgotten. Something had gone wrong. Its rectangular outline flowed and wavered; pulling itself into an upright package it fused its shape into that of a conventional portable t-v unit.

It was holding that emergency form when one of the men—tall, red-haired—peered briefly into the kitchen.

"Nobody in here," the man declared, and hurried on.

"The window," his companion said, panting. Two more figures entered the apartment, an entire crew. "The glass is gone—missing. He got in that way."

"But he's gone." The red-haired man reappeared at the

kitchen door; he snapped on the light and entered, a gun visible in his hand. "Strange...we got here right away, as soon as we picked up the rattle." Suspiciously, he examined his wristwatch. "Rosenburg's been dead only a few seconds...how could he have got out again so fast?"

STANDING in the street entrance, Edward Ackers listened to the voice. During the last half hour the voice had taken on a carping, nagging whine; sinking almost to inaudibility, it plodded along, mechanically turning out its message of complaint. "You're tired," Ackers said. "Go home. Take a hot bath."

"No," the voice said, interrupting its tirade. The locus of the voice was a large illuminated blob on the dark sidewalk, a few yards to Ackers' right. The revolving neon sign read:

BANISH IT!

Thirty times—he had counted—within the last few minutes the sign had captured a passerby and the man in the booth had begun his harangue. Beyond the booth were several theaters and restaurants; the booth was well-situated.

But it wasn't for the crowd that the booth had been erected. It was for Ackers and the offices behind him; the tirade was aimed directly at the Interior Department. The nagging racket had gone on so many months that Ackers was scarcely aware of it. Rain on the roof. Traffic noises. He yawned, folded his arms, and waited.

"Banish it," the voice complained peevishly. "Come on, Ackers. Say something; do something."

"I'm waiting," Ackers said complacently.

A GROUP of middle-class citizens passed the booth and were handed leaflets. The citizens scattered the leaflets after them, and Ackers laughed.

"Don't laugh," the voice muttered. "It's not funny; it costs us money to print those."

"Your personal money?" Ackers inquired.

"Partly." Garth was lonely, tonight. "What are you waiting for? What's happened? I saw a police team leave your roof a few minutes ago..."

"We may take in somebody," Ackers said, "there's been a killing."

Down the dark sidewalk the man stirred in his dreary propaganda booth. "Oh?"

Harvey Garth's voice came. He leaned forward and the two looked directly at each other: Ackers, carefully-groomed, well-fed, wearing a respectable overcoat... Garth, a thin man, much younger, with a lean, hungry face composed mostly of nose and forehead.

"So you see," Ackers told him, "we do need the system. Don't be utopian."

"A man is murdered; and you rectify the moral imbalance by killing the killer." Garth's protesting voice rose in a bleak spasm. "Banish it! Banish the system that condemns men to certain extinction!"

"Get your leaflets here," Ackers parodied drily. "And your slogans. Either or both. What would you suggest in place of the system?"

GARTH'S VOICE was proud with conviction. "Education."

Amused, Ackers asked: "Is that all? You think that would stop anti-social activity? Criminals just don't—*know* better?"

"And psychotherapy, of course." His projected face bony and intense, Garth peered out of his booth like an aroused turtle. "They're sick ... that's why they commit crimes, healthy men don't

commit crimes. And you compound it; you create a sick society of punitive cruelty." He wagged an accusing finger. "You're the real culprit, you and the whole Interior Department. You and the whole Banishment System."

Again and again the neon sign blinked BANISH IT! Meaning, of course, the system of compulsory ostracism for felons, the machinery that projected a condemned human being into some random backwater region of the sidereal universe, into some remote and out-of-the-way corner where he would be of no harm.

"No harm to us, anyhow," Ackers mused aloud.

Garth spoke the familiar argument. "Yes, but what about the local inhabitants?"

TOO BAD about the local inhabitants. Anyhow, the banished victim spent his energy and time trying to find a way back to the Sol System. If he got back before old age caught up with him he was readmitted by society. Quite a challenge... especially to some cosmopolite who had never set foot outside Greater New York. There were— probably — many involuntary expatriates cutting grain in odd fields with primitive sickles. The

remote sections of the universe seemed composed mostly of dank rural cultures, isolated agrarian enclaves typified by small-time bartering of fruit and vegetables and hand-made artifacts.

"Did you know," Ackers said, "that in the Age of Monarchs, a pickpocket was usually hanged?"

"Banish it," Garth continued monotonously, sinking back into his booth. The sign revolved; leaflets were passed out. And Ackers impatiently watched the late-evening street for sign of the hospital truck.

He knew Heimie Rosenberg. A sweeter little guy there never was ... although Heimie had been mixed up in one of the sprawling slave combines that illegally transported settlers to out-system fertile planets. Between them, the two largest slavers had settled virtually the entire Sirius System. Four out of six emigrants were hustled out in carriers registered as "freighters". It was hard to picture gentle little Heimie Rosenberg as a business agent for Tirol Enterprises, but there it was.

AS HE WAITED, Ackers conjectured on Heimie's murder. Probably one element of the incessant subter-

ranean war going on between Paul Tirol and his major rival. David Lantano was brilliant and energetic newcomer ... but murder was anybody's game. It all depended on how it was done; it could be commercial hack or the purest art.

"Here comes something," Garth's voice sounded, carried, to his inner ear by the delicate output transformers of the booth's equipment. "Looks like a freezer."

It was; the hospital truck had arrived. Ackers stepped forward as the truck halted and the back was let down.

"How soon did you get there?" he asked the cop who jumped heavily to the pavement.

"Right away," the cop answered, "but no sign of the killer. I don't think we're going to get Heimie back... they got him dead-center, right in the cerebellum. Expert work, no amateur stuff."

Disappointed, Ackers clambered into the hospital truck to inspect for himself.

VERY TINY and still, Heimie Rosenburg lay on his back, arms at his sides, gazing sightlessly up at the roof of the truck. On his face remained the expression of bewildered wonder. Somebody—one of the cops—had

placed his bent glasses in his clenched hand. In falling he had cut his cheek. The destroyed portion of his skull was covered by a moist plastic web.

"Who's back at the apartment?" Ackers asked presently.

"The rest of my crew," the cop answered. "And an independent researcher. Leroy Beam."

"Him," Ackers said, with aversion. "How is it he showed up?"

"Caught the rattle, too, happened to be passing with his rig. Poor Heimie had an awful big booster on that rattle... I'm surprised it wasn't picked up here at the main offices."

"They say Heimie had a high anxiety level," Ackers said. "Bugs all over his apartment. You're starting to collect evidence?"

"The teams are moving in," the cop said. "We should begin getting specifications in half an hour. The killer knocked out the vid bug set up in the closet. But—" He grinned. "He cut himself breaking the circuit. A drop of blood, right on the wiring; it looks promising."

AT THE apartment, Leroy Beam watched the In-

terior police begin their analysis. They worked smoothly and thoroughly, but Beam was dissatisfied.

His original impression remained: he was suspicious. Nobody could have gotten away so quickly. Heimie had died, and his death—the cessation of his neural pattern—had triggered off an automatic squawk. A rattle didn't particularly protect its owner, but its existence ensured (or usually ensured) detection of the murderer. Why had it failed Heimie?

Prowling moodily, Leroy Beam entered the kitchen for the second time. There, on the floor by the sink, was a small portable t-v unit, the kind popular with the sporting set: a gaudy little packet of plastic and knobs and multi-tinted lenses.

"Why this?" Beam asked, as one of the cops plodded past him. "This t-v unit sitting here on the kitchen floor. It's out of place."

The cop ignored him. In the living room, elaborate police detection equipment was scraping the various surfaces inch by inch. In the half hour since Heimie's death, a number of specifications had been logged. First, the drop of blood on the damaged vid wiring. Second, a hazy heel mark where the murderer had

stepped. Third, a bit of burnt match in the ashtray. More were expected; the analysis had only begun.

It usually took nine specifications to delineate the single individual.

LEROY BEAM glanced cautiously around him. None of the cops was watching, so he bent down and picked up the t-v unit; it felt ordinary. He clicked the on switch and waited. Nothing happened; no image formed. Strange.

He was holding it upside down, trying to see the inner chassis, when Edward Ackers from interior entered the apartment. Quickly, Beam stuffed the t-v unit into the pocket of his heavy overcoat.

"What are you doing here?" Ackers asked.

"Seeking," Beam answered, wondering if Ackers noticed his tubby bulge. "I'm in business, too."

"Did you know Heimie?"

"By reputation," Beam answered vaguely. "Tied in with Tirol's combine, I hear; some sort of front man. Had an office on Fifth Avenue."

"Swank place, like the rest of those Fifth Avenue feather merchants." Ackers went on into the livingroom to watch the detectors gather up evidence.

There was a vast nearsightedness to the wedge grinding ponderously across the carpet. It was scrutinizing at a microscopic level, and its field was sharply curtailed. As fast as material was obtained, it was relayed to the Interior offices, to the aggregate file banks where the civil population was represented by a series of punch cards, cross-indexed infinitely.

Lifting the telephone, Ackers called his wife. "I won't be home," he told her. "Business."

A lag, and then Ellen responded. "Oh?" she said distantly. "Well, thanks for letting me know."

OVER IN the corner, two members of the police crew were delightedly examining a new discovery, valid enough to be a specification. "I'll call you again," he said hurriedly to Ellen, "before I leave. Goodbye."

"Goodbye," Ellen said curtly, and managed to hang up before he did.

The new discovery was the undamaged aud bug, which was mounted under the floor lamp. A continuous magnetic tape—still in motion—gleamed amiably; the murder episode had been recorded sound-wise in its entirety.

"Everything," a cop said gleefully to Ackers. "It was going before Heimie got home."

"You played it back?"

"A portion. There's a couple words spoken by the murderer, should be enough."

Ackers got in touch with Interior. "Have the specifications on the Rosenberg case been fed, yet?"

"Just the first," the attendant answered. "The file discriminates the usual massive category—about six billion names."

Ten minutes later the second specification was fed to the files. Persons with type O blood, with size 11½ shoes, numbered slightly over a billion. The third specification brought in the element of smoker-nonsmoker. That dropped the number to less than a billion, but not much less. Most adults smoked.

"The aud tape will drop it fast," Leroy Beam commented, standing beside Ackers, his arms folded to conceal his bulging coat. "Ought to be able to get age, at least."

THE AUD TAPE, analyzed, gave thirty to forty years as the conjectured age. And—timbre analysis—a man of perhaps two hundred pounds. A little later the

bent steel window frame was examined, and the warp noted. It jibed with the specification of the aud tape. There were now six specifications, including that of sex (male). The number of persons in the in-group was falling rapidly.

"It won't be long," Ackers said genially. "And if he tacked one of those little buckets to the building side, we'll have a paint scrape."

Beam said: "I'm leaving. Good luck."

"Stick around."

"Sorry." Beam moved toward the hall door. "This is yours, not mine. I've got my own business to attend to... I'm doing research for a hot-shot nonferrous mining concern."

Ackers eyed his coat. "Are you pregnant?"

"Not that I know of," Beam said, coloring. "I've led a good clean life." Awkwardly, he patted his coat. "You mean this?"

By the window, one of the police gave a triumphant yap. The two bits of pipe tobacco had been discovered: a refinement for the third specification. "Excellent," Ackers said, turning away from Beam and momentarily forgetting him.

Beam left.

Very shortly he was driv-

ing across town toward his own labs, the small and independent research outfit that he headed, unsupported by a government grant. Resting on the seat beside him was the portable t-v unit, it was still silent.

"FIRST of all," Beam's gowned technician declared, "it has a power supply approximately seventy times that of a portable t-v pack. We picked up the Gamma radiation." He displayed the usual detector. "So you're right, it's not a t-v set."

Gingerly, Beam lifted the small unit from the lab bench. Five hours had passed, and still he knew nothing about it. Taking firm hold of the back he pulled with all his strength. The back refused to come off. It wasn't stuck: there were no seams. The back was not a back; it only looked like a back.

"Then what is it?" he asked.

"Could be lots of things," the technician said non-committally; he had been roused from the privacy of his home, and it was now two-thirty in the morning. "Could be some sort of scanning equipment. A bomb. A weapon. Any kind of gadget."

Laboriously, Beam felt the unit all over, searching for a

flaw in the surface. "It's uniform," he murmured. "A single surface."

"You bet. The breaks are false—it's a poured substance. And," the technician added, "it's hard. I tried to chip off a representative sample but—" He gestured. "No results."

"Guaranteed not to shatter when dropped," Beam said absently. "New extra-tough plastic." He shook the unit energetically; the muted noise of metal parts in motion reached his ear. "It's full of guts."

"We'll get it open," the technician promised, "but not tonight."

BEAM REPLACED the unit on the bench. He could, with bad luck work days on this one item—to discover, after all, that it had nothing to do with the murder of Heimie Rosenberg. On the other hand...

"Drill me a hole in it," he instructed. "So we can see in."

His technician protested: "I drilled, the drill broke. I've sent out for an improved density. This substance is imported; somebody hooked it from a white dwarf system. It was conceived under stupendous pressure."

"You're stalling," Beam

said, irritated. "That's how they talk in the advertising media."

The technician shrugged. "Anyhow, it's extra hard. A naturally-evolved element, or an artificially-processed product from somebody's labs. Who has funds to develop a metal like this?"

"One of the big slavers," Beam said. "That's where the wealth winds up. And they hop around to various systems...they'd have access to raw materials. Special ores."

"Can't I go home?" the technician asked. "What's so important about this?"

"This device either killed or helped kill Heimie Rosenberg. We'll sit here, you and I, until we get it open." Beam seated himself and began examining the check sheet showing which tests had been applied. "Sooner or later it'll fly open like a clam—if you can remember that far back."

BEHIND THEM, a warning bell sounded.

"Somebody in the ante-room," Beam said, surprised and wary. "At two-thirty?" He got up and made his way down the dark hall to the front of the building. Probably it was Ackers. His conscience stirred guiltily:

somebody had logged the absence of the t-v unit.

But it was not Ackers.

Waiting humbly in the cold, deserted anteroom was Paul Tirol, with him was an attractive young woman unknown to Beam. Tirol's wrinkled face broke into smiles, and he extended a hearty hand. "Beam," he said. They shook. "Your front door said you were down here. Still working?"

Guardedly, wondering who the woman was and what Tirol wanted, Beam said: "Catching up on some slipshod errors. Whole firm's going broke."

Tirol laughed indulgently. "Always the japer." His deep-set eyes darted; Tirol was a powerfully-built person, older than most, with a somber, intensely-creased face. "Have room for a few contracts? I thought I might slip a few jobs your way... if you're open."

"I'm always open," Beam countered, blocking Tirol's view of the lab proper. The door, anyhow, had slid itself shut. Tirol had been Heimie's boss...he no doubt felt entitled to all extant information on the murder. Who did it? When? How? Why? But that didn't explain why he was *here*.

"TERRIBLE thing," Tirol said crudely. He made no move to introduce the woman; she had retired to the couch to light a cigarette. She was slender, with mahogany-colored hair, she wore a blue coat, and a kerchief tied around her head.

"Yes," Beam agreed. "Terrible."

"You were there, I understand."

That explained some of it. "Well," Beam conceded, "I showed up."

"But you didn't actually see it?"

"No," Beam admitted, "nobody saw it. Interior is collecting specification material. They should have it down to one card before morning."

Visibly, Tirol relaxed. "I'm glad of that. I'd hate to see the vicious criminal escape. Banishment's too good for him; he ought to be gassed."

"Barbarism," Beam murmured drily. "The days of the gas chamber. Medieval."

Tirol peered past him. "You're working on— Now he was overtly beginning to pry. "Come now, Leroy. Heimie Rosenburg— God bless his soul —was killed tonight and tonight I find you burning the midnight oil. You can talk openly with me; you've got something rele-

vant to his death, haven't you?"

"That's Ackers you're thinking of."

TIROL CHUCKLED. "Can I take a look?"

"Not until you start paying me, I'm not on your books yet."

In a strained, unnatural voice, Tirol bleated: "I want it."

Puzzled, Beam said: "You want what?"

With a grotesque shudder, Tirol blundered forward, shoved Beam aside, and groped for the door. The door flew open and Tirol started noisily down the dark corridor, feeling his way by instinct toward the research labs.

"Hey!" Beam shouted, outraged. He sprinted after the old man, reached the inner door, and prepared to fight it out. He was shaking, partly with amazement, partly with anger. "What the hell?" he demanded breathlessly. "You don't own me!"

Behind him the door mysteriously gave way. Foolishly, he sprawled backward, half-falling into the lab. There, stricken with helpless paralysis, was his technician. And, coming across the floor of the lab was something small and metallic. It looked

like an oversized box of crackers, and it was going lickety-split toward Tirol. The object—metal and gleaming—hopped up into Tirol's arms, and the old man turned and lumbered back up the hall to the anteroom.

"What was it?" the technician said, coming to life.

Ignoring him, Bean hurried after Tirol. "He's got it!" he yelled futilely.

"It—" the technician mumbled. "It was the t-v set. And it ran."

II

THE FILE BANKS at Interior were in agitated flux.

The process of creating a more and more restricted category was tedious, and it took time. Most of the Interior staff had gone home to bed; it was almost three in the morning, and the corridors and offices were deserted. A few mechanical cleaning devices crept here and there in the darkness. The sole source of life was the study chamber of the file banks. Edward Ackers sat patiently waiting for the results, waiting for specifications to come in, and for the file machinery to process them.

To his right a few Interior

police played a benign lottery and waited stoically to be sent out for the pick-up. The lines of communication to Heimie Rosenberg's apartment buzzed ceaselessly. Down the street, along the bleak sidewalk, Harvey Garth was still at his propaganda booth, still flashing his BANISH IT! sign and muttering in people's ears. There were virtually no passerby, now, but Garth went on. He was tireless; he never gave up.

"Psychopath," Ackers said resentfully. Even where he sat, six floors up, the tinny, carping voice reached his middle ear.

"Take him in," one of the game-playing cops suggested. The game, intricate and devious, was a version of a Centauran III practice, modified for players with two Revoke his vendor's license."

ACKERS HAD, when there was nothing else to do, concocted and refined an indictment of Garth, a sort of lay analysis of the man's mental aberrations. He enjoyed playing the psycho-analytic game; it gave him a sense of power.

Garth, Harvey

Prominent compulsive syndrome. Has assumed role of ideological anarchist, opposing

legal and social system. No rational expression, only repetition of key words and phrases. *Idee fixe is Banish the banishment system.* Cause dominates life. Rigid fanatic, probably of the manic type, since...

Ackers let the sentence go, since he didn't really know what the structure of the manic type was. Anyhow, the analysis was excellent, and someday it would be resting in an official slot instead of merely drifting through his mind. And, when that happened, the annoying voice would conclude.

"Big turmoil," Garth droned. "Banishment system in vast upheaval...crisis moment has arrived."

"Why crisis?" Ackers asked aloud.

DOWN BELOW on the pavement Garth responded. "All your machines are humming. Grand excitement reigns. Somebody's head will be in the basket before sun-up." His voice trailed off in a weary blur. "Intrigue and murder. Corpses...the police scurry and a beautiful woman lurks."

To his analysis Ackers added an amplifying clause.

That pleased him. Ackers got up and wandered over to the attendant operating the file. "How's it coming?" he asked.

"Here's the situation," the attendant said. There was a line of gray stubble smeared over his chin, and he was bleary-eyed. "We're gradually paring it down."

ACKERS, as he resumed his seat, wished he were back in the days of the almighty fingerprint. But a print hadn't shown up in months, a thousand techniques existed for print-removal and print alteration. There was now no single specification capable, in itself, of delineating the individual. A composite was needed, a gestalt of the assembled data.

... "Garth's talents are warped by his compulsive sense of *mission*. Having designed an ingenious communication device he sees only its propaganda possibility. Whereas Garth's voice-car mechanism could be put to work for All Humanity.

- 1) blood sample (type O) 6,139,481,601
- 2) shoe size (11½) 1,268,303,431
- 3) smoker 791,992,386
- 3a) smoker (pipe) 52,774,853
- 4) sex (male) 26,449, 094
- 5) age (30-40 years) 9,221,397
- 6) weight (200 lbs) 488,290
- 7) fabric of clothing 17,459
- 8) hair variety 866

9) ownership of utilized weapon 40

A vivid picture was emerging from the data. Ackers could see him clearly. The man was practically standing there, in front of his desk. A fairly young man, somewhat heavy, a man who smoked a pipe and wore an extremely expensive tweed suit. An individual created by nine specifications; no tenth had been listed because no more data of specification level had been found.

Now, according to the report, the apartment had been thoroughly searched. The detection equipment was going outdoors.

"One more should do it," Ackers said, returning the report to the attendant. He wondered if it would come in and how long it would take.

To waste time he telephoned his wife, but instead of getting Ellen he got the automatic response circuit. "Yes sir," it told him. "Mrs. Ackers has retired for the night. You may state a thirty-second message which will be transcribed for her attention tomorrow morning. Thank you.

ACKERS RAGED at the mechanism futilely and

then hung up. He wondered if Ellen were really in bed; maybe she had, as often before, slipped out. But, after all, it was almost three o'clock in the morning. Any sane person would be asleep: only he and Garth were still at their little stations, performing their vital duties.

What had Garth meant by a "*beautiful woman*"?

"Mr. Ackers," the attendant said, "there's a tenth specification coming in over the wires."

Hopefully, Ackers gazed up at the file bank. He could see nothing, of course; the actual mechanism occupied the underground levels of the building, and all that existed here was the input receptors and throw-out slots. But just looking at the machinery was in itself comforting. At this moment the bank was accepting the tenth piece of material. In a moment he would know how many citizens fell into the ten categories...he would know if already he had a group small enough to be sorted one by one.

"Here it is," the attendant said, pushing the report to him.

type of utilized vehicle (color) 7

"My God," Ackers said mildly. "That's low enough.

Seven persons—we can go to work."

"You want the seven cards popped?"

"Pop them," Ackers said.

A MOMENT later, the throw-out slot deposited seven neat white cards in the tray. The attendant passed them to Ackers and he quickly riffled them. The next step was personal motive and proximity: items that had to be gotten from the suspects themselves.

Of the seven names six meant nothing to him. Two lived on Venus, one in the Centaurus System, one was somewhere in Sirius, one was in a hospital, and one lived in the Soviet Union. The seventh, however, lived within a few miles, on the outskirts of New York.

LANTANO, DAVID

That cinched it. The gestalt, in Ackers' mind, locked clearly in place, the image hardened to reality. He had half expected, even prayed to see Lantano's card brought up.

"Here's your pick-up," he said shakily to the game-playing cops. "Better get as large a team together as possible, this one won't be easy." Momentously, he added: "Maybe I'd better come along."

BEAM REACHED the anteroom of his lab as the ancient figure of Paul Tirol disappeared out the street door and onto the dark sidewalk. The young woman, trotting ahead of him, had climbed into a parked car and started it forward; as Tirol emerged, she swept him up and at once departed.

Panting, Beam stood impotently collecting himself on the deserted pavement. The ersatz t-v unit was gone; now he had nothing. Aimlessly, he began to run down the street. His heels echoed loudly in the cold silence. No sign of them; no sign of anything.

"I'll be damned," he said, with almost religious awe. The unit — a robot device of obvious complexity — clearly belonged to Paul Tirol; as soon as it had identified his presence it had sprinted gladly to him. For...protection?

It had killed Heimie; and it belonged to Tirol. So, by a novel and indirect method, Tirol had murdered his employee, his Fifth Avenue front man. At a rough guess, such a highly-organized robot would cost in the neighborhood of a hundred thousand dollars.

A lot of money, considering that murder was the easi-

est of criminal acts. Why not hire an itinerant goon with a crowbar?

Beam started slowly back toward his lab. Then, abruptly, he changed his mind and turned in the direction of the business area. When a free-wheeling cab came by, he hailed it and clambered in.

"Where to, sport?" the starter at cab relay asked. City cabs were guided by remote control from one central source.

He gave the name of a specific bar. Settling back against the seat he pondered. Anybody could commit a murder; an expensive, complicated machine wasn't necessary.

The machine had been built to do something else. The murder of Heimie Rosenberg was incidental.

AAGAINST the nocturnal skyline, a huge stone residence loomed. Ackers inspected it from a distance. There were no lights burning; everything was locked up tight. Spread out before the house was an acre of grass. David Lantano was probably the last person on Earth to own an acre of grass outright; it was less expensive to buy an entire planet in some other system.

"Let's go," Ackers com-

manded; disgusted by such opulence, he deliberately trampled through a bed of roses on his way up the wide porch steps. Behind him flowed the team of shock-police.

"Gosh," Lantano rumbled, when he had been roused from his bed. He was a kindly-looking, rather youthful fat man, wearing now an abundant silk dressing robe. He would have seemed more in place as director of a boy's summer camp; there was an expression of perpetual good-humor on his soft, sagging face. "What's wrong, officer?"

Ackers loathed being called officer. "You're under arrest," he stated.

"Me?" Lantano echoed feebly. "Hey, officer. I've got lawyers to take care of these things." He yawned voluminously. "Care for some coffee?" Stupidly, he began pattering around his front room, fixing a pot.

IT HAD BEEN years since Ackers had splurged and bought himself a cup of coffee. With Terran land covered by dense industrial and residential installations there was no room for corps, and coffee had refused to "take" in any other system. Lantano probably grew his

somewhere on an illicit plantation in South America—the pickers probably believed they had been transported to some remote colony.

"No thanks," Ackers said. "Let's get going."

Still dazed, Lantano plopped himself down in an easy chair and regarded Ackers with alarm. "You're serious." Gradually his expression faded; he seemed to be drifting back to sleep. "Who?" he murmured distantly.

"Heimie Rosenburg."

"No kidding." Lantano shook his head listlessly. "I always wanted him in my company. Heimie's got real charm. Had, I mean."

It made Ackers nervous to remain here in the vast lush mansion. The coffee was heating, and the smell of it tickled his nose. And, heaven forbid—there on the table was a basket of *apricots*.

"Peaches," Lantano corrected, noticing his fixed stare. "Help yourself."

"Where—did you get them?"

LANTANO shrugged. "Synthetic dome. Hydroponics. I forget where ... I don't have a technical mind."

You know what the fine is for possessing natural fruit?"

"Look," Lantano said earnestly, clasping his mushy

hands together. "Give me the details on this affair, and I'll prove to you I had nothing to do with it. Come on, officer."

"Ackers," Ackers said.

"Okay, Ackers. I thought I recognized you, but I wasn't sure; didn't want to make a fool of myself. When was Heimie killed?"

Grudgingly, Ackers gave him the pertinent information.

For a time Lantano was silent. Then, slowly, gravely, he said: "You better look at those seven cards again. One of those fellows isn't in the Sirui System ... he's back here."

Ackers calculated the chances of successfully banishing a man of David Lantano's importance. His organization — Interplan Export — had fingers all over the galaxy; there'd be search crews going out like bees. But nobody went out banishment distance. The condemned, temporarily ionized, rendered in terms of charged particles of energy, radiated outward at the velocity of light. This was an experimental technique that had failed; it worked only one way.

"Consider," Lantano said thoughtfully. "If I was going to kill Heimie — *would I do it myself?* You're not being logical, Ackers. I'd

send **somebody**." He pointed a fleshy finger at Ackers. "You imagine I'd risk my own life? I know you pick up everybody...you usually turn up enough specifications."

"We have ten on you," Ackers said briskly.

"So you're going to banish me?"

"If you're guilty, you'll have to face banishment like anyone else. Your particular prestige has no bearing."

NETTLED, Ackers said: "Obviously, you'll be released. You'll have plenty of opportunity to prove your innocence; you can question each of the ten specifications in turn."

He started to go on and describe the general process of court procedure employed in the twenty-first century, but something made him pause. David Lantano and his chair seemed to be gradually sinking into the floor. Was it an illusion? Blinking Ackers rubbed his eyes and peered. At the same time, one of his policemen yelped a warning of dismay; Lantano was quietly leaving them.

"Come back!" Ackers demanded; he leaped forward and grabbed hold of the chair. Hurriedly, one of his men shorted out the power supply

of the building; the chair ceased descending and groaned to a halt. Only Lantano's head was visible above the floor level. He was almost entirely submerged in a concealed escape shaft.

"What seedy, useless—" Ackers began.

"I know," Lantano admitted, making no move to drag himself up. He seemed resigned; his mind was again off in clouds of contemplation. "I hope we can clear all this up. Evidently I'm being framed. Tirol got somebody who looks like me, somebody to go in and murder Heimie."

Ackers and the police crew helped him up from his depressed chair. He gave no resistance; he was too deep in his brooding.

THE CAB let Leroy Beam off in front of the bar. To his right, in the next block, was the Interior Building ... and, on the sidewalk, the opaque blob that was Harvey Garth's propaganda booth.

Entering the bar, Beam found a table in the back and seated himself. Already he could pick up the faint, distorted murmur of Garth's reflections. Garth, speaking to himself in a directionless blur, was not yet aware of him.

"Banish it," Garth was saying. "Banish all of them. Bunch of crooks and thieves." Garth, in the miasma of his booth, was rambling vitriolically.

"What's going on?" Beam asked. "What's the latest?"

Garth's monologue broke off as he focussed his attention on Beam. "You in there? In the bar?"

"I want to find out about Heimie's death."

"Yes," Garth said. "He's dead; the files are moving, kicking out cards."

"When I left Heimie's apartment," Beam said, "they had turned up six specifications." He punched a button on the drink selector and dropped in a token.

"That must have been earlier," Garth said; "they've got more."

"How many?"

"Ten in all."

TEN. That was usually enough. And all ten of them laid out by a robot device ... a little procession of hints strewn along its path: between the concrete side of the building and the dead body of Heimie Rosenberg.

"That's lucky," he said speculatively. "Helps out Ackers."

"Since you're paying me," Garth said, "I'll tell you the rest. They've already gone

out on their pick-up; Ackers went along."

Then the device had been successful. Up to a point, at least. He was sure of one thing: the device should have been out of the apartment. Tirol hadn't known about Heimie's death rattle; Heimie had been wise enough to do the installation privately.

Had the rattle not brought persons into the apartment, the device would have scuttled out and returned to Tirol. Then, no doubt, Tirol would have detonated it. Nothing would remain to indicate that a machine could lay down a trail of synthetic clues: blood type, fabric, pipe tobacco, hair ... all the rest, and all spurious.

"Who's the pick-up on?" Beam asked.

"David Lantano."

Beam winced. "Naturally. That's what the whole thing's about; he's being framed!"

GARTH WAS indifferent; he was a hired employee, stationed by the pool of independent researchers to syphon information from the Interior Department. He had no actual interest in politics; his *Banish It!* was sheer window-dressing.

"I know it's a frame," Beam said, "and so does Lan-

tano. But neither of us can prove it ... unless Lantano has an absolutely airtight alibi."

"Banish it," Garth murmured, reverting to his routine. A small group of late-retiring citizens had strolled past his booth, and he was masking his conversation with Beam. The conversation, directed to the one listener, was inaudible to everyone else; but it was better not to take risks. Sometimes, very close to the booth, there was an audible feedback of the signal.

Hunched over his drink, Leroy Beam contemplated the various items he could try. He could inform Lantano's organization, which existed relatively intact... but the result would be epic civil war. And, in addition, he didn't really care if Lantano was framed; it was all the same to him. Sooner or later one of the big slavers had to absorb the other: cartel is the natural conclusion of big business. With Lantano gone, Tirol would painlessly swallow his organization; everybody would be working at his desk as always.

ON THE other hand, there might someday be a device — now half-completed

in Tirol's basement — that left a trail of *Leroy Beam* clues. Once the idea caught on, there was no particular end.

"And I had the damn thing," he said fruitlessly. "I hammered on it for five hours. It was a t-v unit, then, but it was still the device that killed Heimie."

"You're positive it's gone?"

"It's not only gone — it's out of existence. Unless she wrecked the car driving Tirol home."

"She?" Garth asked.

"The woman." Beam pondered; "she saw it. Or she knew about it; she was with him." But, unfortunately, he had no idea who the woman might be.

"What'd she look like?" Garth asked.

"Tall, mahogany hair. Very nervous mouth."

"I didn't realize she was working with him openly. They must have really have needed the device." Garth added: "You didn't identify her? I guess there's no reason why you should; she's kept out of sight."

"Who is she?"

"That's Ellen Ackers."

Beam laughed sharply. "And she's driving Paul Tirol around?"

"She's — well, she's driving Tirol around, yes. You can put it that way."

"How long?"

"I thought you were in on it. She and Ackers split up; that was last year. But he wouldn't let her leave; he wouldn't give her a divorce. Afraid of the publicity. Very important to keep up respectability ... keep the shirt fully stuffed."

"He knows about Paul Tirol and her?"

"Of course not. He knows she's — spiritually hooked up. But he doesn't care ... as long as she keeps it quiet. It's his position he's thinking about."

"If Acker found out," Beam murmured. "If he saw the link between his wife and Tirol ... he'd ignore his ten interoffice memos. He'd want to haul in Tirol. The hell with the evidence; he could always collect that later." Beam pushed away his drink; the glass was empty, anyhow. "Where is Ackers?"

"I told you. Out at Lantano's place, picking him up."

"He'd come back here? He wouldn't go home?"

"Naturally he'd come back here." Garth was silent a moment. "I see a couple of Interior vans turning into the garage ramp. That's probably

the pick-up crew returning."

Beam waited tensely. "Is Ackers along?"

"Yes, he's there. *Banish It!*" Garth's voice rose in stentorian frenzy. *Banish the system of Banishment! Route out the crooks and Pirates!*"

Sliding to his feet, Beam left the bar.

ADULL LIGHT showed in the rear of Edward Ackers' apartment: probably the kitchen light. The front door was locked. Standing in the carpeted hallway, Beam skillfully tilted with the door mechanism. It was geared to respond to specific neural patterns: those of its owners and a limited circle of friends. For him there was no activity.

Kneeling down, Beam switched on a pocket oscillator and started sine wave emission. Gradually, he increased the frequency. At perhaps 150,000 cps the lock guiltily clicked; that was all he needed. Switching the oscillator off, he rummaged through his supply of skeleton patterns until he located the closet cylinder. Slipped into the turret of the oscillator, the cylinder emitted a synthetic neural pattern close enough to the real thing to affect the lock.

The door swung open. Beam entered.

In half-darkness the living room seemed modest and tasteful. Ellen Ackers was an adequate housekeeper. Beam listened. Was she home at all? And if so, where? Awake? Asleep?

He peeped into the bedroom. There was the bed, but nobody was in it.

If she wasn't here she was at Tirol's. But he didn't intend to follow her; this was as far as he cared to risk.

HE INSPECTED the diningroom. Empty. The kitchen was empty, too. Next came an upholstered general-purpose rumpus room; on one side was a gaudy bar and on the other a wall-to-wall couch. Tossed on the couch was a woman's coat, purse, gloves. Familiar clothes: Ellen Ackers had worn them. So she had come here after leaving his research lab.

The only room left was the bathroom. He fumbled with the knob; it was locked from the inside. There was no sound, but somebody was on the other side of the door. He could sense her in there.

"Ellen," he said, against the panelling. "Mrs. Ellen Ackers; is that you?"

No answer. He could sense

her not making any sound at all: a stifled, frantic silence.

While he was kneeling down, fooling with his pocketful of magnetic lock-pullers, an explosive pellet burst through the door at head level and splattered into the plaster of the wall beyond.

Instantly the door flew open; there stood Ellen Ackers, her face distorted with fright. One of her husband's government pistols clenched in her small, bony hand. She was less than a foot from him. Without getting up, Beam grabbed her wrist; she fired over his head, and then the two of them deteriorated into harsh, labored breathing.

"COME ON," Beam managed finally. The nozzle of the gun was literally brushing the top of his head. To kill him, she would have to pull the pistol back against her. But he didn't let her; he kept hold of her wrist until finally, reluctantly, she dropped the gun. It clattered to the floor and he got stiffly up.

"You were sitting down," she whispered, in a stricken, accusing voice.

"Kneeling down: picking the lock. I'm glad you aimed for my brain." He picked up

the gun and succeeded in getting it into his overcoat pocket; his hands were shaking.

Ellen Ackers gazed at him starkly; her eyes were huge and dark, and her face was an ugly white. Her skin had a dead cast, as if were artificial, totally dry, thoroughly sifted with talc. She seemed on the verge of hysteria; a harsh, muffled shudder struggled up inside her, lodging finally in her throat. She tried to speak but only a rasping noise came out.

"Gee, lady," Beam said, embarrassed. "Come in the kitchen and sit down."

She stared at him as if he had said something incredible or obscene or miraculous; he wasn't sure which.

"Come on." He tried to take hold of her arm but she jerked frantically away. She had on a simple green suit, and in it she looked very nice; a little too thin and terribly tense, but still attractive. She had on expensive earrings, an imported stone that seemed always in motion . . . but otherwise her outfit was austere.

"You — were the man at the lab," she managed, in a brittle, choked voice.

"I'M LEROY BEAM.
An independent." Awk-

wardly guiding her, he led her into the kitchen and seated her at the table. She folded her hands in front of her and studied them fixedly; the bleak boniness of her face seemed to be increasing rather than receding. He felt uneasy.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Cup of coffee?" He began searching the cupboards for a bottle of Venusian-grown coffee substitute. While he was looking, Ellen Ackers said tautly: "You better go in there. In the bathroom. I don't think he's dead, but he might be."

Beam raced into the bathroom. Behind the plastic shower curtain was an opaque shape. It was Paul Tirol, lying wadded up in the tub, fully clothed. He was not dead but he had been struck behind the left ear and his scalp was leaking a slow, steady trickle of blood. Beam took his pulse, listened to his breathing, and then straightened up.

At the doorway Ellen Ackers materialized, still pale with fright. "Is he? Did I kill him?"

"He's fine."

VISIBLY, she relaxed. "Thank God. It happened

so fast — he stepped ahead of me to take the *M* inside his place, and then I did it. I hit him as lightly as I could. He was so interested in it ... he forgot about me." Words spilled from her, quick, jerky sentences, punctuated by rigid tremors of her hands. "I lugged him back in the car and drove here; it was all I could think of."

"What are you in this for?"

Her hysteria rose in a spasm of convulsive muscle-twitching. "It was all planned — I had *everything* worked out. As soon as I got hold of it I was going to—" She broke off.

"Blackmail Tirol?" he asked, fascinated.

She smiled weakly. "No, not Paul. It was Paul who gave me the idea ... it was his first idea, when his researchers showed him the thing. The — *unreconstructed M*, he calls it. *M* stands for machine. He means it can't be educated, Morally corrected."

Incredulous, Beam said: "You were going to blackmail your husband."

Ellen Ackers nodded. "So he'd let me leave."

Suddenly Beam felt sincere respect for her. "My God — the rattle. Heimie

didn't arrange that; you did. So the device would be trapped in the apartment."

"Yes," she agreed. "I was going to pick it up. But Paul showed up with other ideas; he wanted it, too."

"What went haywire? You have it, don't you?"

Silently she indicated the linen closet. "I stuffed it away when I heard you."

Beam opened the linen closet. Resting primly on the neatly-folded towels was a small, familiar, portable t-v unit.

"It reverted," Ellen said, from behind him, in an utterly defeated monotone. "As soon as I hit Paul it changed. For half an hour I've been trying to get it to shift. It won't. It'll stay that way forever."

III

BEAM WENT to the telephone and called a doctor. In the bathroom, Tirol groaned and feebly thrashed his arms. He was beginning to return to consciousness.

"Was that necessary?" Ellen Ackers demanded. "The doctor — did you have to call?"

Beam ignored her. Bending, he lifted the portable t-v unit and held it in his hands;

he felt its weight move up his arms like a slow, leaden fatigue. The ultimate adversary, he thought; too stupid to be defeated. It was worse than an animal. It was a rock, solid and dense, lacking all qualities. Except, he thought, the quality of determination. It was determined to persist, to survive; a rock with will. He felt as if he were holding up the universe, and he put the unreconstructed M down.

FROM BEHIND him Ellen said: "It drives you crazy." Her voice had regained tone. She lit a cigaret with a silver cigaret lighter and then shoved her hands in the pockets of her suit.

"Yes," he said.

"There's nothing you can do, is there? You tried to get it open before. They'll patch Paul up, and he'll go back to his place, and Lantano will be banished —" She took a deep shuddering breath. "And the Interior Department will go on as always."

"Yes," he said. Still kneeling, he surveyed the M. Now, with what he knew, he did not waste time struggling with it. He considered it impassively; he did not even bother to touch it.

In the bathroom, Paul Ti-

rol was trying to crawl from the tub. He slipped back, cursed and moaned, and started his laborious ascent once again.

"Ellen?" his voice quavered, a dim and distorted sound, like dry wires rubbing.

"Take it easy," she said between her teeth; not moving she stood smoking rapidly on her cigaret.

"Help me, Ellen," Tirol muttered. "Something happened to me ... I don't remember what. Something hit me."

"He'll remember," Ellen said.

BEAM SAID: "I can take this thing to Ackers as it is. You can tell him what it's for—what it did. That ought to be enough; he won't go through with Lantano."

But he didn't believe it, either. Ackers would have to admit a mistake, a basic mistake, and if he had been wrong to pick up Lantano, he was ruined. And so, in a sense, was the whole system of delineation. It could be fooled; it had been fooled. Ackers was rigid, and he would go right on in a straight line: the hell with Lantano. The hell with abstract justice. Better to pre-

serve cultural continuity and keep society running on an even keel.

"Tirol's equipment," Beam said. "Do you know where it is?"

She shrugged wildly. "What equipment?"

"This thing—" he jabbed at the M— "was made somewhere."

"Not here, Tirol didn't make it."

"All right," he said reasonably. They had perhaps six minutes more before the doctor and the emergency medical carrier arrived on rooftop. "Who did make it?"

"The alloy was developed on Bellatrix." She spoke jerkily, word by word. "The rind...forms a skin on the outside, a bubble that gets sucked in and out of a reservoir. That's its rind, the t-v shape. It sucks it back and becomes the M; its ready to act."

"Who made it?" he repeated.

"A Bellatrix machine tool syndicate ... a subsidiary of Tirol's organization. They're made to be watchdogs. The big plantations on outplanets use them; they patrol. They get poachers."

BEAM SAID: "Then originally they're not set for one person."

"No."

"Then *who* set this for Heime? Not a machine tool syndicate."

"That was done here."

He straightened up and lifted the portable t-v unit. "Let's go. Take me there, where Tirol had it altered."

For a moment the woman did not respond. Grabbing her arm he hustled her to the door. She gasped and stared at him mutely.

"Come on," he said, pushing her out into the hall. The portable t-v unit bumped against the door as he shut it; he held the unit tight and followed after Ellen Ackers.

THE TOWN was slatternly and run-down, a few retail stores, fuel station, bars and dance halls. It was two hours' flight from Greater New York and it was called Olum.

"Turn right," Ellen said listlessly. She gazed out at the neon signs and rested her arm on the window sill of the ship.

They flew above warehouses and deserted streets. Lights were few. At an intersection Ellen nodded and he set the ship down on a roof.

Below them was a sagging, fly-specked wooden frame store. A peeling sign was

propped up in the window; **FULTON BROTHERS LOCKSMITHS**. With the sign were doorknobs, locks, keys, saws, and spring-wound alarm clocks. Somewhere in the interior of the store a yellow night light burned fitfully.

"This way," Ellen said. She stepped from the ship and made her way down a flight of rickety wooden stairs. Beam laid the portable t-v unit on the floor of the ship, locked the doors, and then followed after the woman. Holding onto the railing, he descended to a back porch on which were trash cans and a pile of sodden newspapers tied with string. Ellen was unlocking a door and feeling her way inside.

First he found himself in a musty, cramped storeroom. Pipe and rolls of wire and sheets of metal were heaped everywhere; it was like a junkyard. Next came a narrow corridor and then he was standing in the entrance of a workshop. Ellen reached overhead and groped to find the hanging string of a light. The light clicked on. To the right was a long and littered workbench with a hand grinder at one end, a vise, a keyhole saw; two wooden stools were before the bench

and half-assembled machinery was stacked on the floor in no apparent order. The workshop was chaotic, dusty, and archaic. On the wall was a threadbare blue coat hung from a nail: the workcoat of a machinist.

"Here," Ellen said, with bitterness. "This is where Paul had it brought. This outfit is owned by the Tirol organization; this whole slum is part of their holdings."

BEAM WALKED to the bench. "To have altered it," he said, "Tirol must have had a plate of Heimie's neural pattern." He overturned a heap of glass jars; screws and washers poured onto the pitted urface of the bench.

"He got it from Heimie's door," Ellen said. "He had Heimie's lock analyzed and Heimie's pattern inferred from the setting of the tumblers."

"And he had the M opened?"

"There's an old mechanic," Ellen said. "A little dried-up old man; he runs this shop. Patrick Fulton. He installed the bias on the M."

"A bias," Beam said, nodding.

"A bias against killing people. Heimie was the exception, for everybody else it

took its protective form. Out in the wilds they would have set it for something else, not a t-v unit." She laughed, a sudden ripple close to hysteria. "Yes, that would have looked odd, it sitting out in a forest somewhere, a t-v unit. They would have made it into a rock or a stick."

"A rock," Beam said. He could imagine it. The M waiting, covered with moss, waiting for months, years, and then, weathered and corroded, finally picking up the presence of a human being. Then the M ceasing to be a rock, becoming, in a quick blur of motion, a box one foot wide and two feet long. An oversized cracker box that started forward—

BUT THERE was something missing. "The fakery," he said. "Emitting flakes of paint and hair and tobacco. How did that come in?"

In a brittle voice Ellen said: "The landowner murdered the poacher, and he was culpable in the eyes of the law. So the M left clues. Claw marks. Animal blood. Animal hair."

"God," he said, revolted. "Killed by an animal."

"A bear, a wildcat—whatever was indigenous. it varied. The predator of the re-

gion, a natural death." With her toe she touched a cardboard carton under the workbench. "It's in there, it used to be, anyhow. The neural plate, the transmitter, the discarded parts of the M, the schematics."

The carton had been a shipping container for power packs. Now the packs were gone, and in their place was a carefully-wrapped inner box, sealed against moisture and insect infestation. Beam tore away the metal foil and saw that he had found what he wanted. He gingerly carried the contents out and spread them on the workbench among the soldering irons and drills.

"It's all there," Ellen said, without emotion.

"**M**AYBE," he said, "I can leave you out of this. I can take this and the t-v unit to Ackers and try it without your testimony."

"Sure," she said wearily.

"What are you going to do?"

"Well," she said, "I can't go back to Paul, so I guess there's not much I can do."

"The blackmail bit was a mistake," he said.

Her eyes glowed. "Okay."

"If he releases Lantano," Beam said, "he'll be asked to resign. Then he'll probably

give you your divorce, it won't be important to him one way or another."

"I—" she began. And then she stopped. Her face seemed to fade, as if the color and texture of her flesh was vanishing from within. She lifted one hand and half-turned, her mouth open and the sentence still unfinished.

Beam, reaching, slapped the overhead light out; the workroom winked into darkness. He had heard it too, had heard it at the same time as Ellen Ackers. The rickety outside porch had creaked and now the slow, ponderous motion was past the store-room and into the hall.

A HEAVY MAN, he thought. A slow-moving man, sleepy, making his way step by step, his eyes almost shut, his great body sagging beneath his suit. Beneath, he thought, his expensive tweed suit. In the darkness the man's shape was looming; Beam could not see it but he could sense it there, filling up the doorway as it halted. Boards creaked under its weight. In a daze he wondered if Ackers already knew, if his order had already been rescinded. Or had the man got out on his own, worked through his own organization?

The man, starting forward again, spoke in a deep, husky voice. "Ugh," Lantano said. "Damn it."

Ellen began to shriek. Beam still did not realize what it was; he was still fumbling for the light and wondering stupidly why it did not come on. He had smashed the bulb, he realized. He lit a match. The match went out and he grabbed for Ellen Ackers's cigaret lighter. It was in her purse, and it took him an agonized second to get it out.

The unreconstructed M was approaching them slowly, one receptor stalk extended. Again it halted, swiveled to the left until it was facing the workbench. It was not now in the shape of a portable t-v unit; it had retaken its crackerbox shape.

"The plate," Ellen Ackers whispered. "It responded to the plate."

THE M had been aroused by Heimie Rosenberg's looking for it. But Beam still felt the presence of David Lantano. The big man was still here in the room; the sense of heaviness, the proximity of weight and ponderousness had arrived with the machine, as it moved, sketched Lantano's existence. As he fixedly watched, the

machine produced a fragment of cloth fabric and pressed it into a nearby heap of grid-mesh. Other elements, blood and tobacco and hair, were being produced, but they were too small for him to see. The machine pressed a heelmark into the dust of the floor and then projected a nozzle from its anterior section.

Her arm over her eyes, Ellen Ackers ran away. But the machine was not interested in her; revolving in the direction of the workbench it raised itself and fired. An explosive pellet, released by the nozzle, traveled across the workroom and entered the debris heaped across the bench. The pellet detonated; bits of wire and nails showered in particles.

Heimie's dead, Beam thought, and went on watching. The machine was searching for the plate, trying to locate and destroy the synthetic neural emission. It swiveled, lowered its nozzle hesitantly, and then fired again. Behind the workbench, the wall burst and settled into itself.

Beam, holding the cigaret lighter, walked toward the M. A receptor stalk waved toward him and the machine retreated. Its lines wavered, flowed, and then painfully

reformed. For an interval, the device struggled with itself; then, reluctantly, the portable t-v unit again became visible. From the machine a high-pitched whine emerged, an anguished squeal. Conflicting stimuli were present; the machine was unable to make a decision.

THE MACHINE was developing a situation neurosis and the ambivalence of its response was destroying it. In a way its anguish had a human quality, but he could not feel sorry for it. It was a mechanical contraption trying to assume a posture of disguise and attack at the same time; the breakdown was one of relays and tubes, not of a living brain. And it had been a living brain into which it had fired its original pellet. Heimie Rosenburg was dead, and there were no more like him and no possibility that more could be assembled. He went over to the machine and nudged it onto its back with his foot.

The machine whirled snake-like and spun away. "Ugh, damn it!" it said. It showered bits of tobacco as it rolled off; drops of blood and flakes of blue enamel fell from it as it disappeared into the corridor. Beam could

hear it moving about, bumping into the walls like a blind, damaged organism. After a moment he followed after it.

"In the corridor, the machine was traveling in a slow circle. It was erecting around itself a wall of particies: cloth and hairs and burnt matches and bits of tobacco, the mass cemented together with blood.

"Ugh, damn it," the machine said in its heavy masculine voice. It went on working, and Beam returned to the other room.

"Where's a phone?" he said to Ellen Ackers.

She stared at him vacantly.

"It won't hurt you," he said. He felt dull and worn-out. "It's in a closed cycle. It'll go on until it runs down."

"It went crazy," she said, she shuddered.

"No," he said. "Regression. It's trying to hide."

From the corridor the machine said, "Ugh. Damn it." Beam found the phone and called Edward Ackers.

BANISHMENT for Paul Tirol meant first a procession of bands of darkness and then a protracted, infuriating interval in which empty matter drifted randomly around him, arranging

itself into first one pattern and then another.

The period between the time Ellen Ackers attacked him and the time banishment sentence had been pronounced was vague and dim in his mind. Like the present shadows, it was hard to pin down.

He had— he thought — awakened in Ackers' apartment. Yes, that was it; and Leroy Beam was there, too. A sort of transcendental Leroy Beam who hovered robustly around, arranging everybody in configurations of his choice. A doctor had come. And finally Edward Ackers had shown up to face his wife and the situation.

Bandaged, and on his way into Interior, he had caught a glimpse of a man going out. The ponderous, bulbous shape of David Lantano, on his way home to his luxurious stone mansion and acre of grass.

At sight of him Tirol had felt a goad of fear. Lantano hadn't even noticed him; an acutely thoughtful expression on his face. Lantano padded into a waiting car and departed.

"YOU HAVE one thousand dollars," Edward Ackers was saying wearily, during the final phase. Dis-

torted, Ackers's face bloomed again in the drifting shadows around Tirol, an image of the man's last appearance. Ackers, too, was ruined, but in a different way. "The law supplies you with one thousand dollars to meet your immediate needs, also you'll find a pocket dictionary of representative out-system dialects."

Ionization itself was painless. He had no memory of it; only a blank space darker than the blurred images on either side.

"You hate me," he had declared accusingly, his last words to Ackers. "I destroyed you. But...it wasn't you." He had been confused. "Lantano. Maneuvered but not. How? You did..."

But Lantano had had nothing to do with it. Lantano had shambled off home, a withdrawn spectator throughout. The hell with Lantano. The hell with Ackers and Leroy Beam and— reluctantly—the hell with Mrs. Ellen Ackers.

"Wow," Tirol babbled, as his drifting body finally collected physical shape. "We had a lot of good times... didn't we, Ellen?"

And then a roaring hot field of sunlight was radiating down on him. Stupefied, he sat slumped over, limp

and passive. Yellow, scalding sunlight ... everywhere. Nothing but the dancing heat of it, blinding him, cowing him into submission.

HE WAS sprawled in the middle of a yellow clay road. To his right was a baking, drying field of corn wilted in the midday heat. A pair of large, disreputable-looking birds wheeled silently overhead. A long way off was a line of blunted hills: ragged troughs and peaks that seemed nothing more than heaps of dust. At their base was a meager lump of man-made buildings.

At least he *hoped* they were man-made.

As he climbed shakily to his feet, a feeble noise drifted to his ears. Coming down the hot, dirty road was a car of some sort. Apprehensive and cautious, Tirol walked to meet it.

The driver was human, a thin, almost emaciated youth with pebbled black skin and a heavy mass of weed-colored hair. He wore a stained canvas shirt and overalls. A bent, unlit cigaret hung from his lower lip. The car was a combustion-driven model and have rolled out of the twentieth century; battered and twisted, it rattled to a halt as the driver critically in-

spected Tirol. From the car's radio yammered a torrent of tinny dance music.

"You a tax collector?" the driver asked.

"Certainly not," Tirol said, knowing the bucolic hostility toward tax collectors. But—he floundered. He couldn't confess that he was a banished criminal from Earth; that was an invitation to be massacred, usually in some picturesque way. "I'm an inspector," he announced, "Department of Health."

Satisfied, the driver nodded. "Lots of scuttly cut-beetle, these days. You fellows got a spray, yet? Losing one crop after another."

TIROL GRATEFULLY climbed into the car. "I didn't realize the sun was sun hot," he murmured.

"You've got an accent," the youth observed, starting up the engine. "Where you from?"

"Speech impediment," Tirol said cagily. "How long before we reach town?"

"Oh, maybe an hour," the youth answered, as the car wandered lazily forward.

Tirol was afraid to ask the name of the planet. It would give him away. But he was consumed with the need to know. He might be two star-

systems away or two million; he might be a month out of Earth or seventy years. Naturally, he had to get back; he had no intention of becoming a sharecropper on some backwater colony planet.

"Pretty swip," the youth said, indicating the torrent of noxious jazz pouring from the car raido. "That's Calamine Freddy and his Woolly-Bear Creole Original Band. Know that tune?"

"No," Tirol muttered. The sun and dryness and heat made his head ache, and he wished to God he knew where he was.

THE TOWN was miserably tiny. The houses were dilapidated; the streets were dirt. A kind of domestic chicken roamed here and there, pecking in the rubbish. Under a porch a bluish quasideg lay sleeping. Perspiring and unhappy, Paul Tirol entered the bus station and located a schedule. A series of meaningless entries flashed by: names of towns. The names of the planet, of course, was not listed.

"What's the fare to the nearest port?" he asked the indolent official behind the ticket window.

The official considered. "Depends on what sort of

port you want. Where you planning to go?"

"Toward Center," Tirol said. "Center" was the term used in out-systems for the Sol Group.

Dispassionately, the official shook his head. "No inter-system port around here."

Tirol was baffled. Evidently, he wasn't on the hub planet of this particular system. "Well," he said, "then the nearest interplan port."

The official consulted a vast reference book. "You want to go to which system-member?"

"Whichever one has the inter-system port," Tirol said patiently. He would leave from there.

"That would be Venus."

ASTONISHED, Tirol said: "Then this system —" He broke off, chagrined, as he remembered. It was the parochial custom in many out-systems, especially those a long way out, to name their member planets after the original nine. This one was probably called "Mars" or "Jupiter" or "Earth," depending on its position in the group. "Fine," Tirol finished. "One-way ticket to—Venus. Venus."

Venus, or what passed for Venus, was a dismal orb no larger than an asteroid. A



bleak cloud of metallic haze hung over it, obscuring the sun. Except for mining and smelting operations the planet was deserted. A few dreary shacks dotted the barren countryside. A perpetual wind blew, scattering debris and trash.

But the intersystem port was here, the field which its nearest star-neighbor and, ultimately, with the balance of the universe. At the moment a giant freighter was taking on ore.

Tirol entered the ticket office. Spreading out most of his remaining money he said: "I want a one-way ticket taking me toward center. As far as I can go."

The clerk calculated. "You care what class?"

"No," he said, mopping his forehead.

"How fast?"

"No."

The clerk said: That'll carry you as far as the Betelgeuse System."

"Good enough," Tirol said, wondering what he did then. But at least he could contact his organization from there; he was already, back in the charted universe. But now he was almost broke. He felt a prickle of icy fear, despite the heat.

THE HUB PLANET of the Betelgeuse System was called Plantagenet III. It was a thriving junction for passenger carriers transporting settlers to undeveloped colony planets. As soon as Tirol's ship landed he hurried across the field to the taxi stand.

"Take me to Tirol Enterprises," he instructed, praying there was an outlet here. There had to be, but it might be operating under a front name. Years ago he lost track of the particulars of his sprawling empire.

"Tirol Enterprises," the cab driver repeated thoughtfully. "Nope, no such outfit, mister."

Stunned, Tirol said: "Who does the slaving around here?"

The driver eyed him. He was a wizened, dried-up little

man with glasses; he peered turtle-wise, without compassion. "Well," he said, "I've been told you can get carried out-system without papers. There's a shipping contractor ... called—" He reflected. Tirol, trembling, handed him a last bill.

"The Reliable Export-Import," the driver said.

That was one of Lantano's fronts. In horror Tirol said: "And that's it?"

The driver nodded.

DAZED, Tirol moved away from the cab. The buildings of the field danced around him; he settled down on a bench to catch his breath. Under his coat his heart pounded unevenly. He tried to breathe, but his breath caught painfully in his throat. The bruise on his head where Ellen Ackers had hit him began to throb. It was true, and he was gradually beginning to understand and believe it. He was not going to get to Earth; he was going to spend the rest of his life here on this rural world, cut off from his organization and everything he had built up over the years.

And, he realized, as he sat struggling to breathe, the rest of his life was not going to be very long.

He thought about Heimie Rosenburg.

"Betrayed," he said, and coughed wrackingly. "You betrayed me. You hear that? Because of you I'm here. It's your fault; I never should have hired you."

He thought about Ellen Ackers. "You too," he gasped, coughing. Sitting on the bench he alternately coughed and gasped and thought about the people who had betrayed him. There were hundreds of them.

THE LIVINGROOM of David Lantano's house was furnished in exquisite taste. Priceless late nineteenth century Blue Willow dishes lined the walls in a rack of wrought iron. At his antique yellow plastic and chrome table, David Lantano was eating dinner, and the spread of food amazed Beam even more than the house.

Lantano was in good humor and he ate with enthusiasm. His linen napkin was tucked under his chin and once, as he sipped coffee, he dribbled and belched. His brief period of confinement was over; he ate to make up for the ordeal.

He had been informed, first by his own apparatus and now by Beam, that ban-

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The lives of the entire population of this little world—thirty thousand people—lay in the hands of one man with a just grievance. And what were Ragusnik's demands—money? power? better working conditions? No, none of these; Ragusnik's wants were amply provided for—all except one, the one he demanded.



MALE STRIKEBREAKER

by ISAAC ASIMOV

(author of "Living Space")

ELVIS BLEI rubbed his plump hands and said, "Self-containment is the word." He smiled uneasily as he helped Steven Lamorak of Earth to a light. There was uneasiness all over his smooth

face with its small, wide-set eyes.

Lamorak puffed smoke appreciatively and crossed his lanky legs. His hair was powdered with gray and he had a large and powerful jawbone.

"Home-grown?" he asked staring critically at the cigaret. He tried to hide his own disturbance at the other's tension.

"Quite," said Blei.

"I wonder," said Lamorak, "that you have room on your small world for such luxuries."

(Lamorak thought of his first view of Elsevere from the spaceship visiplat. It was a jagged, airless planetoid, some hundred miles in diameter—just a dust-gray rough-hewn rock, glimmering dully in the light of its sun, 200,000,000 miles distant. It was the only object more than a mile in diameter that circled that sun, and now men had burrowed into that miniature world and constructed a society in it. And he himself, as a sociologist, had come to study the world and see how humanity had made itself fit into that queerly specialized niche.)

Blei's politely-fixed smile expanded a hair. He said, "We are not a small world, Dr. Lamorak; you judge us by two-dimensional standards. The surface area of Elsevere is only $\frac{3}{4}$ that of the State of New York, but that's irrelevant. Remember, we can occupy, if we wish, the entire interior of Elsevere. A sphere of 50 miles radius has a vol-

ume of well over half a million cubic miles. If all of Elsevere were occupied by levels 50 feet apart, the total surface area within the planetoid would be 56,000,000 square miles, and that is equal to the total land area of Earth. And none of these square miles, doctor, would be unproductive."

LAMORAK SAID, "Good Lord," and stared blankly for a moment. "Yes, of course you're right. Strange I never thought of it that way. But then, Elsevere is the only thoroughly exploited planetoid world in the Galaxy; the rest of us simply can't get away from thinking of two-dimensional surfaces, as you point out. Well, I'm more than ever glad that your Council has been so cooperative as to give me a free hand in this investigation of mine."

Blei nodded convulsively at that.

Lamorak frowned slightly and thought: *He acts for all the world as though he wished I had not come. Something's wrong.*

Blei said, "Of course, you understand that we are actually much smaller than we could be; only minor portions of Elsevere have as yet been hollowed out and occupied. Nor are we particularly anx-

ious to expand, except very slowly. To a certain extent we are limited by the capacity of our pseudo-gravity engines and Solar energy converters."

"I understand. But tell me, Councillor Blei—as a matter of personal curiosity, and not because it is of prime importance to my project—could I view some of your farming and herding levels first? I am fascinated by the thought of fields of wheat and herds of cattle inside a planetoid."

"You'll find the cattle small by your standards, doctor, and we don't have much wheat. We grow yeast to a much greater extent. But there will be some wheat to show you. Some cotton and tobacco, too. Even fruit-trees."

"Wonderful. As you say, self-containment. You recirculate everything, I imagine."

LAMORAK'S sharp eyes did not miss the fact that this last remark twinged Blei. The Elseverian's eyes narrowed to slits that hid his expression.

He said, "We must recirculate, yes. Air, water, food, minerals—everything that is used up—must be restored to its original state; waste products are reconverted to raw materials. All that is needed is energy, and we have enough of that. We don't manage with a hundred percent efficiency,

of course; there is a certain seepage. We import a small amount of water each year; and if our needs grow, we may have to import some coal and oxygen."

Lamorak said, "When can we start our tour, Councillor Blei?"

Blei's smile lost some of its negligible warmth. "As soon as we can, doctor. There are some routine matters that must be arranged."

Lamorak nodded, and having finished his cigaret, stubbed it out.

Routine matters? There was none of this hesitancy during the preliminary correspondence. Elsevere had seemed proud that its unique planetoid existence had attracted the attention of the Galaxy.

He said, "I realize I would be a disturbing influence in a tightly-knit society," and watched grimly as Blei leaped at the explanation and made it his own.

"Yes," said Blei, "we feel marked off from the rest of the Galaxy. We have our own customs. Each individual Elseverian fits into a comfortable niche. The appearance of a stranger without fixed caste is unsettling."

"The caste system does involve a certain inflexibility."

"Granted," said Blei quickly; "but there is also a certain

self-assurance. We have firm rules of intermarriage and rigid inheritance of occupation. Each man, woman and child knows his place, accepts it, and is accepted in it; we have virtually no neurosis or mental illness."

"And are there no misfits?" asked Lamorak.

Blei shaped his mouth as though to say, no, then clamped it suddenly shut, biting the word into silence; a frown deepened on his forehead. He said, at length, "I will arrange for the tour, doctor. Meanwhile, I imagine you would welcome a chance to freshen up and to sleep."

They rose together and left the room, Blei politely motioning the Earthman to precede him out the door.

LAMORAK felt oppressed by the vague feeling of crisis that had pervaded his discussion with Blei.

The newspaper reinforced that feeling. He read it carefully before getting into bed, with what was at first merely a clinical interest. It was an eight-page tabloid of synthetic paper. One quarter of its items consisted of "personals": births, marriages, deaths, record quotas, expanding habitable volume (not area! three dimensions!). The remainder included scholarly essays, ed-

ucational material, and fiction. Of news, in the sense to which Lamorak was accustomed, there was virtually nothing.

One item only could be so considered and that was chilling in its incompleteness.

It said, under a small headline: *DEMANDS UNCHANGED: "There has been no change in his attitude yesterday. The Chief Councillor, after a second interview, announced that his demands remain completely unreasonable and cannot be met under any circumstances."*

Then, in parenthesis, and in different type, there was the statement: *The editors of this paper agree that Elsevere cannot and will not jump to his whistle, come what may.*

Lamorak read it over three times. *His attitude. His demands. His whistle.*

Whose?

He slept uneasily, that night.

HE HAD NO time for newspapers in the days that followed; but spasmodically, the matter returned to his thoughts.

Blei, who remained his guide and companion for most of the tour, grew ever more withdrawn.

On the third day, (quite artificially clock-set in an

Earth-like twenty-four hour pattern), Blei stopped at one point, and said, "Now this level is devoted entirely to chemical industries. That section is not important—"

But he turned away a shade too rapidly, and Lamorak seized his arm. "What are the products of that section?"

"Fertilizers. Certain organics," said Blei stiffly.

Lamorak held him back, looking for what sight Blei might be evading. His gaze swept over the close-by horizons of lined rock and the buildings squeezed and layered between the levels.

Lamorak said, "Isn't that a private residence there?"

Blei did not look in the indicated direction.

Lamorak said, "I think that's the largest one I've seen yet. Why is it here on a factory level?" That alone made it noteworthy. He had already seen that the levels on Elsevier were divided rigidly among the residential, the agriculture and the industrial.

He looked back and called, "Councillor Blei!"

THE COUNCILLOR was walking away and Lamorak pursued him with hasty steps. "Is there something wrong, sir?"

Blei muttered, "I am rude,

I know. I am sorry. There are matters that prey on my mind —" He kept up his rapid pace.

"Concerning *his* demands."

Blei came to a full halt. "What do *you* know about that?"

"No more than I've said. I read that much in the newspaper."

Blei muttered something to himself.

Lamorak said, "Ragusnik? What's that?"

Blei sighed heavily. "I suppose you ought to be told. It's humiliating, deeply embarrassing. The Council thought that matters would certainly be arranged shortly and that your visit need not be interfered with, that you need not know or be concerned. But it is almost a week now. I don't know what will happen and, appearances notwithstanding, it might be best for you to leave. No reason for an Outworlder to risk death."

The Earthman smiled incredulously. "Risk death? In this little world, so peaceful and busy. I can't believe it."

The Elserverian councillor said, "I can explain. I think it best I should." He turned his head away. "As I told you, everything on Elsevere must recirculate. You understand that."

"Yes."

"That in cludes—uh, human wastes."

"I assumed so," said Lamorak.

"Water is reclaimed from it by distillation and absorption. What remains is converted into fertilizer for yeast use; some of it is used as a source of fine organics and other by-products. These factories you see are devoted to this."

"Well?" Lamorak had experienced a certain difficulty in the drinking of water when he first landed on Elsevere, because he had been realistic enough to know what it must be reclaimed from; but he had conquered the feeling easily enough. Even on Earth, water was reclaimed by natural processes from all sorts of unpalatable substances.

BLEI, WITH increasing difficulty, said, "Igor Ragusnik is the man who is in charge of the industrial processes immediately involving the wastes. The position has been in his family since Elsevere was first colonized. One of the original settlers was Mikhail Ragusnik and he—

he—"

"Was in charge of waste reclamation."

"Yes. Now that residence you singled out is the Ragusnik residence; it is the best and most elaborate on the

planetoid. Ragusnik gets many privileges the rest of us do not have; but, after all—" Passion entered the Councillor's voice with great suddenness, "we cannot *speak* to him."

"What?"

"He demands full social equality. He wants his children to mingle with ours, and our wives to visit— Oh!" It was a groan of utter disgust.

Lamorak thought of the newspaper item that could not even bring itself to mention Ragusnik's name in print, or to say anything specific about his demands. He said, "I take it he's an outcast because of his job."

"Naturally. Human wastes and—" words failed Blei. After a pause, he said more quietly, "As an Earthman, I suppose you don't understand."

"As a sociologist, I think I do." Lamorak thought of the Untouchables in ancient India, the ones who handled corpses. He thought of the position of swineherds in ancient Judea.

HE WENT on, "I gather Elsevere will not give in to those demands."

"Never," said Blei, energetically. "Never."

"And so?"

"Ragusnik has threatened to cease operations."

"Go on strike, in other words."

"Yes."

"Would that be serious?"

"We have enough food and water to last quite a while; reclamation is not essential in that sense. But the wastes would accumulate; they would infect the planetoid. After generations of careful disease control, we have low natural resistance to germ diseases. Once an epidemic started—and one would—we would drop by the hundred."

"Is Ragusnik aware of this?"

"Yes, of course."

"Do you think he is likely to go through with his threat, then?"

"He is mad. He has already stopped working; there has been no waste reclamation, since the day before you landed." Blei's bulbous nose sniffed at the air as though it already caught the whiff of excrement.

Lamorak sniffed mechanically at that, but smelled nothing.

Blei said, "So you see why it might be wise for you to leave. We are humiliated, of course, to have to suggest it."

But Lamorak said, "Wait; not just yet. Good Lord, this is a matter of great interest to me professionally. May I

speak to the Ragusnik?"

"On no account," said Blei, alarmed.

"But I would like to understand the situation. The sociological conditions here are unique and not to be duplicated elsewhere. In the name of science—"

"How do you mean, speak? Would image-reception do?"

"Yes."

"I will ask the Council," muttered Blei.

THEY SAT about Lamorak uneasily, their austere and dignified expressions badly marred with anxiety. Blei, seated in the midst of them, studiously avoided the Earthman's eyes.

The Chief Councillor, gray-haired, his face harshly wrinkled, his neck scrawny, said in a soft voice, "If in any way you can persuade him, sir, out of your own convictions, we will welcome that. In no case, however, are you to imply that we will, in any way, yield."

A gauzy curtain fell between the Council and Lamorak. He could make out the individual councillors still, but now he turned sharply toward the receiver before him. It glowed to life.

A head appeared in it, in natural color and with great realism. A strong dark head, with massive chin faintly

stubbled, and thick, red lips set into a firm horizontal line.

The image said, suspiciously, "Who are you?"

Lamorak said, "My name is Steven Lamorak; I am an Earthman."

"An Outworlder?"

"That's right. I am visiting Elsevere. You are Ragusnik?"

"Igor Ragusnik, at your service," said the image, mockingly. "Except that there is no service and will be none until my family and I are treated like human beings."

Lamorak said, "Do you realize the danger that Elsevere is in? The possibility of epidemic disease?"

"In twenty-four hours, the situation can be made normal, if they allow me humanity. The situation is *theirs* to correct."

"You sound like an educated man, Ragusnik."

"So?"

"I am told you're denied of no material comforts. You are housed and clothed and fed better than any one on Elsevere. Your children are the best educated."

"Granted. But all by servomechanism. And motherless girl-babies are sent us to care for until they grow to be our wives. And they die young for loneliness. Why?" There was sudden passion in his

voice. "Why must we live in isolation as if we were all monsters, unfit for human beings to be near? Aren't we human beings like others, with the same needs and desires and feelings. Don't we perform an honorable and useful function—"

THERE WAS a rustling of sighs from behind Lamorak. Ragusnik heard it, and raised his voice. "I see you of the Council behind there. Answer me: Isn't it an honorable and useful function? It is *your* waste made into food for *you*. Is the man who purifies corruption worse than the man who produces it. —Listen, Councilors, I will *not* give in. Let all of Elsevere die of disease—including myself and my son, if necessary—but I will not give in. My family will be better dead of disease, than living as now."

Lamorak interrupted. "You've led this life since birth, haven't you?"

"And if I have?"

"Surely you're used to it."

"Never. Resigned, perhaps. My father was resigned, and I was resigned for a while; but I have watched my son, my only son, with no other little boy to play with. My brother and I had each other, but my son will never have anyone, and I am no longer

resigned. I am through with Elsevere and through with talking."

The receiver went dead.

THE CHIEF COUNCIL-LOR'S face had paled to an aged yellow. He and Blei were the only ones of the group left with Lamorak. The Chief Councillor said, "The man is deranged; I do not know how to force him."

He had a glass of wine at his side; as he lifted it to his lips, he spilled a few drops that stained his white trousers with purple splotches.

Lamorak said, "Are his demands so unreasonable? Why can't he be accepted into society?"

There was momentary rage in Blei's eyes. "A dealer in excrement." Then he shrugged. "You are from Earth."

Incongruously, Lamorak thought of another unacceptable, one of the numerous classic creations of the medieval cartoonist, Al Capp. The variously-named "inside man at the skunk works."

He said, "Does Ragusnik really deal with excrement? I mean, is there physical contact? Surely, it is all handled by automatic machinery."

"Of course," said the Chief Councillor.

"Then exactly what is Ragusnik's function?"

"He manually adjusts the various controls that assure the proper functioning of the machinery. He shifts units to allow repairs to be made; he alters functional rates with the time of day; he varies end production with demand." He added sadly, "If we had the space to make the machinery ten times as complex, all this could be done automatically; but that would be such needless waste."

"But even so," insisted Lamorak, "all Ragusnik does he does simply by pressing buttons or closing contacts or things like that."

"Yes."

"Then his work is no different from any Elseverian's."

Blei said, stiffly, "You don't understand."

"And for that will you risk the death of your children?"

"We have no other choice," said Blei. There was enough agony in his voice to assure Lamorak that the situation was torture for him, but that he had no other choice indeed.

Lamorak shrugged in disgust. "Then break the strike. Force him."

"How?" said the Chief Councillor. "Who would touch him to or go near him? And if we kill him by blasting from a distance, how will that help us?"

LAMORAK said, thoughtfully, "Would you know how to run his machinery?"

"The Chief Councillor came to his feet. "I?" he howled.

"I don't mean *you*," cried Lamorak at once. "I used the pronoun in its indefinite sense. Could *someone* learn how to handle Ragusnik's machinery?"

Slowly, the passion drained out of the Chief Councillor. "It is in the handbooks, I am certain—though I assure you I have never concerned myself with it."

"Then couldn't someone learn the procedure and substitute for Ragusnik until the man gives in?"

Blei said, "Who would agree to do such a thing? Not I, under any circumstances?"

Lamorak thought fleetingly of Earthly taboos that might be almost as strong. He thought of cannibalism, incest, a pious man cursing God. He said, "But you must have made provision for vacancy in the Ragusnik job. Suppose he died."

"Then his son would automatically succeed to his job, or his nearest other relative," said Blei.

"What if he had no adult relatives? What if all his family died at once?"

"That has never happened; it will never happen."

The Chief Councillor added, "If there were danger of it, we might, perhaps, place a baby or two with the Ragusnik and have it raised to the profession."

"Ah. And how would you choose that baby?"

"From among children of mothers who died in childbirth, as we choose the future Ragusnik bride."

"Then choose a substitute Ragusnik now, by lot," said Lamorak.

The Chief Councillor said, "*No! Impossible!* How can you suggest that? If we select a baby, that baby is brought up to the life; it knows no other. At this point, it would be necessary to choose an adult and subject him to Ragusnik-hood. No, Dr. Lamorak, we are neither monsters nor abandoned brutes."

No use, thought Lamorak helplessly. *No use, unless—*

He couldn't bring himself to face that *unless* just yet.

THAT NIGHT, Lamorak slept scarcely at all. Ragusnik asked for only the basic elements of humanity. But opposing that were thirty thousands Elseverians who faced death.

The welfare of thirty thou-

sand on one side; the just demands of one family on the other. Could one say that thirty thousand who would support such injustice deserved to die? Injustice by what standards? Earth's? Elsewhere's? And who was Lamorak that he should judge?

And Ragusnik? He was willing to let thirty thousand die, including men and women who merely accepted a situation they had been taught to accept and could not change if they wished to. And children who had nothing at all to do with it.

Thirty thousand on one side; a single family on the other.

Lamorak made his decision in something that was almost despair; in the morning he called the Chief Councillor.

He said, "Sir, if you can find a substitute, Ragusnik will see that he has lost all chance to force a decision in his favor and will return to work."

"There can be no substitute," sighed the Chief Councillor; "I have explained that."

"No substitute among the Elseverians, but I am not an Elseverian; it doesn't matter to me. I will substitute."

THEY WERE excited, much more excited than

Lamorak himself. A dozen times they asked him if he were serious.

Lamorak had not shaved, and he felt sick, "Certainly, I'm serious. And any time Ragusnik acts like this, you can always import a substitute. No other world has the taboo and there will always be plenty of temporary substitutes available if you pay enough."

(He was betraying a brutally exploited man, and he knew it. But he told himself desperately: *Except for ostracism, he's very well treated. Very well.*)

They gave him the handbooks and he spent six hours, reading and re-reading. There was no use asking questions. None of the Elseverians knew anything about the job, except for what was in the handbook; and all seemed uncomfortable if the details were as much as mentioned.

"Maintain zero reading of galvanometer A-2 at all times during red signal of the Lunge-howler," read Lamorak. "Now what's a Lunge-howler?"

"There will be a sign," muttered Blei, and the Elseverians looked at each other hang-dog and bent their heads to stare at their fingertips.

THEY LEFT him long before he reached the small rooms that were the central headquarters of generations of working Ragusniks, serving their world. He had specific instructions concerning which turnings to take and what level to reach, but they hung back and let him proceed alone.

He went through the rooms painstakingly, identifying the instruments and controls, following the schematic diagrams in the handbook.

There's a Lunge-howler, he thought, with gloomy satisfaction. The sign did indeed say so. It had a semi-circular face bitten into holes that were obviously designed to glow in separate colors. Why a "howler" then?

He didn't know.

Somewhere, thought Lamorak, somewhere wastes are accumulating, pushing against gears and exits, pipelines and stills, waiting to be handled in half a hundred ways. Now they just accumulate.

Not without a tremor, he pulled the first switch as indicated by the handbook in its directions for "Initiation." A gentle murmur of life made itself felt through the floors and walls. He turned a knob and lights went on.

At each step, he consulted the handbook, though he knew it by heart; and with each step, the rooms brightened and the dial-indicators sprang into motion and a humming grew louder.

Somewhere deep in the factories, the accumulated wastes were being drawn into the proper channels.

A HIGH-PITCHED signal sounded and startled Lamorak out of his painful concentration. It was the communications signal and Lamorak fumbled his receiver into action.

Ragusnik's head showed, startled; then slowly, the incredulity and outright shock faded from his eyes. "That's how it is, then."

"I'm not an Elseverian, Ragusnik; I don't mind doing this."

"But what business is it of yours? Why do you interfere?"

"I'm on your side, Ragusnik, but I must do this."

"Why, if you're on my side? Do they treat people on your world as they treat me here?"

"Not any longer. But even if you are right, there are thirty thousand people on Elsevere to be considered."

"They would have given in; you've ruined my only chance."

"They would *not* have given in. And in a way, you've won; they know now that you're dissatisfied. Until now, they never dreamed a Ragusnik could be unhappy, that he could make trouble."

"What if they know? Now all they need do is hire an Outworlder anytime."

Lamorak shook his head violently. He had thought this through in these last bitter hours. "The fact that they know means that Elseverians will begin to think about you; some will begin to wonder if it's right to treat a human so. And if Outworlders are hired, they'll spread the word that this goes on upon Elsevere and Galactic public opinion will be in your favor."

"And?"

"Things will improve. In your son's time, things will be much better."

"In my son's time," said Ragusnik, his cheeks sagging. "I might have had it now.—Well, I lose. I'll go back to the job."

Lamorak felt an overwhelming relief. "If you'll come here now, sir, you may have your job and I'll consider it an honor to shake your hand."

Ragusnik's head snapped up and filled with a gloomy pride. "You call me 'sir' and

offer to shake my hand. Go about your business, Earthman, and leave me to my work, for I would not shake yours."

LAMORAK returned the way he had come, relieved that the crisis was over, and profoundly depressed, too.

He stopped in surprise when he found a section of corridor cordoned off, so he could not pass. He looked about for alternate routes, then startled at a magnified voice above his head. "Dr. Lamorak, do you hear me? This is Councillor Blei."

Lamorak looked up. The voice came over some sort of public address system, but he saw no sign of an outlet.

He called out, "Is anything wrong? Can you hear me?"

"I hear you."

Instinctively, Lamorak was shouting. "Is anything wrong. There seems to be a block here. Are there complications with Ragusnik?"

"Ragusnik has gone to work," came Blei's voice. "The crisis is over, and you must make ready to leave."

"Leave?"

"Leave Elsevere; a ship is being made ready for you now."

"But wait a bit." Lamorak was confused by this sudden leap of events. "I haven't

completed my gathering of data."

Blei's voice said, "This cannot be helped. You will be directed to the ship and your belongings will be sent after you by servo-mechanisms. We trust—we trust—"

Something was becoming clear to Lamorak. "You trust what?"

"We trust you will make no attempt to see or speak directly to any Elseverian. And of course we hope you will avoid embarrassment by not attempting to return to Elsevere at any time in the future. A colleague of yours would be welcome if further

data concerning us is needed."

"I understand," said Lamorak, tonelessly. Obviously, he had himself become a Ragusnik. He had handled the controls that in turn had handled the wastes; he was ostracized. He was a corpse-handler, a swineherd, an inside man at the skonk works.

He said, Good-bye."

Blei's voice said, "Before we direct you, Dr. Lamorak—On behalf of the Council of Elsevere, I thank you for your help in this crisis."

"You're welcome," said Lamorak, bitterly.

———— ★ ————

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BRIDEY MURPHY AND THE MARTIAN PRINCESS

ARTICLE

by the author
of "The Stone of The Wise"

by L. Sprague
de Camp

MOREY BERNSTEIN, a young businessman of Pueblo, Colorado, once undertook to hypnotize Virginia Tighe, the wife of an acquaintance. (In accordance with custom, he calls her "Ruth Simons.") Bernstein told her to "regress"; that is, to go back to her childhood and describe the scenes. Then he urged her to go back *before* her birth.

"You will find," he told her, "that there are other scenes in your memory.

There are other scenes from faraway lands and distant places in your memory."

Sure enough—as anybody who knows hypnotism could have foreseen—Mrs. Tighe did just that. The scenes, though very thin, were said to be those of nineteenth-century Ireland. The personality was that of Bridget ("Bridey") Murphy, who became Mrs. Brian McCarthy and died in the fullness of her years.

All this resulted in Bernstein's best-selling *Search for*

Bridey Murphy; a national reincarnationist-fad; Bridey Murphy clubs and amateur hypnosis-circles; a mass of articles in magazines and newspapers about the case; and two or three suicides by people in a hurry to get to their next incarnation.

Investigation of Bridey Murphy in Ireland failed to prove her existence. But investigation of Mrs. Tighe has accounted for everything in the *Bridey* fantasy in terms of buried childhood memories. These include those of a real Irish Bridey Murphy.

By now Bridey has been so well taken apart (notably by Klein *et al.* in *A Scientific Report on "The Search for Bridey Murphy"*) that there is no point in my analyzing the whole case. I will just mention a couple of points of language.

MRS. TIGHE is said to speak with an Irish brogue. That may be; I have not heard the recordings of her seances. But in grammar and vocabulary, her speech is solidly modern North American English. Except for a few plainly artificial additions like "colleen," there is no trace of authentic nineteenth-century Irish English.

For example: Mrs. Tighe,

asked a yes-or-no question, always says "yes," "no," or "uh-huh." The Irish don't say "uh-huh." They don't even say "yes" and "no" very often. They say "I will," "I will not;" "It is," "It is not;" "He did," "He did not," and so on. The Gaelic language, like Latin and Chinese, lacks exact equivalents of English "yes" and "no." Replies like "I did not" are, like some other Irishisms, literal translations of the Erse. Mrs. Tighe also uses "mad" in the modern American sense of "angry" and thinks that "lough" is Gaelic for "river," which it isn't.

Her worst failure is her pronunciation of Gaelic words. Irish is phonetically peculiar and has a bizarre system of spelling. Without knowing a complex set of rules, you can hardly ever tell how a word is sounded from its looks. Mrs. Tighe pronounced "Cuchulainn" as "cooch-a-lain;" "Deirdre" as "dee-ay-druh;" "Emer" as "emmer;" "Sean" as "see-an;" and "lough" to rhyme with "now." These are the pronunciations of an American who has read the words but never heard them. The Irish pronunciations are approximately "koo-khullen" (rhyming with "Sue Bullen"), "dare-dra" (with Anglicized forms

"dare-drec," "deer-dra," etc.), "ayver" (rhyming with "wa-ver"), "shawn," and "lock" (like the Scottish "loch," rhyming with German *doch*.)

Enough of this nonsense. The Bridey craze, like the Saucerian and Dianetic fads, support Hegel's saying: "Peoples and governments never have learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it." This is usually paraphrased as "We learn from history that people do not learn from history." For Bridey had predecessors who duplicated her doings in an almost uncanny way.

FORTY-ODD YEARS ago, a housewife of St. Louis, Missouri, Mrs. Pearl Pollard Curran (1883-1937) came under the periodic control of *alter ego* calling herself Patience Worth. At this time there was a surge of interest in Spiritualistic phenomena. The planchette or ouija-board was in widespread use, and on one of these instruments Patience first appeared. On 8 July, 1913, she announced: "Many months ago I lived. Again I come—Patience Worth my name."

Asked about herself, Patience was evasive: "About me you would know much. Yes-

terday is dead. Let thy mind rest as to the past."

Pressed for detail, Patience revealed, little by little, that she had been a seventeenth-century English country girl who sailed to America and was slain by the Indians. She resisted efforts to pin her down to names and dates by which her story could be checked. Meanwhile she poured out a stream of sentimental stories, poems, sermons, and aphorisms which some thought to have literary merit.

In time, Patience learned to speak directly with Mrs. Curran's tongue. Mr. Curran recorded her dictations. She finally learned to run a typewriter.

Word spread. Caspar W. Yost, an editor of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, ran articles on Patience, who proved a marvelous circulation-builder. Like Bernstein, he wrote a best-selling book on the case: *Patience Worth, a Psychic Mystery* (1916). Patience's writings were published and translated into German. There were Patience Worth clubs and even a Patience Worth magazine.

The fad soon subsided, though Mrs. Curran kept on giving seances into the twenties. A couple of competent scholars analyzed Patience's

output from the linguistic point of view. They found it ordinary American English disguised by Biblical archaisms and Scottish dialect words, often misused. Patience's dialect, unlike that of most immigrants, got stronger instead of weaker as the years passed.

Mrs. Curran's background provided all the clue needed to account for Patience: her English parents, the fact that her uncle was a medium, and her exposure in childhood to the archaisms of Ozark speech.

IF WE "regress" a little farther, we find an even more egregious case of ancient and exotic souls in modern bodies.

In the 1890's there dwelt in Geneva, Switzerland, a young woman known to the literature by the pseudonym of "Helene Smith." She had a good job with a local company and practiced mediumship on the side. She had been a dreamy child whose habit of reverie had strengthened into trance-mediumship. Despite health, good looks, and a respectable background, she disliked and despised her environment. She affected an air of regal hauteur and snubbed her suitors as mere bourgeois.

Mille. Smith's romantic leanings appeared in the list of spirits who spoke through her. These included Victor Hugo, Marie Antoinette, and Cagliostro—who, oddly enough, did not understand his native Italian. But the most remarkable spirits were those from India and Mars.

It seems that in an earlier life, in the fourteenth century, Helene was the daughter of an Arab shaykh named Ferrus. Under the name of Simandini she became the eleventh wife of Prince Sivrouka Nayaka of Kanara in India. When Sivrouka died, Simandini dutifully burned herself on his pyre. All this she acted out "with most affecting particulars."

IN THE Martian Cycle, Helene appeared as a Martian princess, Esenale. Another spirit also appeared: Esenale's boy-friend, an aggressive young Martian named Astane. Astane described his colorful Martian home and even drew pictures of it. The landscape was a kind of lush tropical Asian setting, even less like the real Mars than that of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Astane wrote and spoke fluent Martian. His Martian script looks a bit like the Devanagari alphabet

of India with some of the letters turned upside down.

Helene came to the notice of the French astronomer Flournoy, who was dabbling in psychical research. Flournoy was impressed by her spoken Martian, a whole new language reeled off as if by a native speaker. When Helene was taxed with the fact that Simandini, though an Arab girl, did not seem to know any Arabic, she wrote a sentence in perfectly good Arabic. Sacred name! Flournoy asked himself, how could this rather ordinary middle-class Swiss girl come by all this learned matter? His puzzlement deepened when he found that there *had* been a Prince Sivrouka of Nayaka, who died when Helene said he did.

Then Flournoy looked further into the matter—that second, critical scrutiny that kills off so many beautiful theories. Helene, it seems, had been browsing the stacks of the Geneva Public Library. What he saw, she kept—not on the conscious level but, by the well known process of cryptomnesia, in her unconscious. From there it could be raised in trances. The Arabic sentence, for instance, was the motto in Arabic on the fly-leaf of one

of the books accessible to Helene.

She wrote it, not right to left as a real Arab would, but mechanically left to right.

HER “MARTIAN language” was a kind of hog-French—a language she invented by substituting word for word for French. In phonetics, grammar, and word-order it follows French exactly. Thus, as the French words for “the,” *le*, and “him” *lui*, are sounded alike, so are the corresponding Martian words both pronounced *ze*.

(There’s an amusing parallel in the Venerian language made up by Edgar Rice Burroughs for his Carson Napier stories. If you study the end-paper maps of Amtor in these novels, you will see that *Noobol* and *Kooaad* are transcribed letter for letter from English into Amtorian. Burroughs indicates that he means the *oo* digraph to mean what it does in English—namely, the /*u*/ sound of “rule.” In Amtorian, the sound is still represented by the symbol of /*o*/ doubled. Of course, the English *oo* or /*u*/ is not really the /*o*/ sound lengthened, as a stranger might think. The sound is so spelt as a result of historical accidents. As far as I

know, the only other language in which the /u/ sound is represented by a double-o is Afrikaans—South African Dutch. As it is not likely that the Venerians would hit upon the same clumsy device, you may infer that Am-torian was invented by a speaker either of English or of Afrikaans.)

Flournoy wrote a book about Helene, *Des Indes a la planete Mars* (1900) which sold well both in France and in the English translation. The few points about which he was then still puzzled were soon cleared up by further probing.

As for Helene, her impersonations, however absurd, won a smashing success. A rich American woman, taken in by all the Martian rubbish, gave her a life income. She at once quit her job to devote her life to inspirational psychic painting.

WHAT, THEN, are all these subordinate personalities that appear in trances, claiming to be ghosts, discarnate spirits, or the entranced person in a former life?

Leaving out the frauds, they are all cases of the same disorder: multiple or dissociated personality. It is probable that nobody's personal-

ity is completely integrated; that all parts are tightly knit and each part in constant touch with all the rest. But the degree of dissociation goes all the way from the momentarily childish acts of persons in a panic or hysterical fit, to permanent splitting of the personality into independent and often hostile parts.

Multiple personalities have been studied by many of the greatest names in the history of psychology. These studies have been reported at length and can be read by anybody except, apparently, Mr. Bernstein. The "classical" case, and certainly the most exciting and best-written one, is that reported by Morton Prince in *The Dissociation of a Personality* (1905). Here is Dr. Prince's story:

A young woman called "Miss Beauchamp" (pseudonym) came to him because of nervousness and poor health. She was a nurse in training at a Bostonian hospital. She was sickly, reserved, studious, dreamy, pious, sensitive, and over-conscientious. Prince treated her by hypnotic suggestion. Under hypnosis her extreme reticence and self-effacement went away. Prince called her waking personality B1 and

her personality under hypnosis B2.

DURING THE treatments, another personality—B3—began to appear in the trances. This entity called herself "Sally" and was like a spoiled child: vivacious, contrary, irresponsible, and untrustworthy. B3 insisted she was a separate person who had been cooped up for many years in the same body with B1 whom she despised, and that she knew everything B1 did or thought. As B3 gained confidence she began to control B1's actions by suggestion, making her tell lies and get tipsy.

B1 was hyper-suggestible even in her waking state. If she was told all feeling would leave a finger, it left. If she was told she could not see a rod in front of her, she could not see it. In time, B3 "willed" herself into complete control for as long as ten hours. By such means as burning Miss Beauchamp's arm with a cigaret, B3 could reawaken B1, who was distressed by mysterious gaps in her memory. During times of control, B3 played practical jokes on her body-mate. She hid her money, censored her mail, brought snakes and spiders into her room, and pulled her sewing apart.

Then another personality, B4, appeared, completely different from the others. She was self-assertive, irascible, worldly, vain, opinionated, selfish, sociable, and self-reliant. Her memories were the same as those of B1, except that the last six years were missing. When B4 first came on, she thought she was still living six years before, and shrewdly tried to pump Prince—whom she did not know—to find out what was going on. Her skill at drawing people out, and dodging embarrassing questions, suggested that of a medium fishing for information from her clients.

For two and a half years these three waking personalities—B1, B3, and B4—took turns running Miss Beauchamp's body. Prince tried to get them to merge, to make up one normal personality. But they would not, they all hated one another, and, while the meek B1 was cooperative, the other two were not.

EACH PERSONALITY thought herself the rightful owner of the body and wanted to suppress the other two. B1 and B4 were horrified by the idea of merging, as their tastes were opposite in every way. B1, for instance, liked rings, religion,

sewing, children, old people, and charitable work; B4 had no use for any of these. Since B1 and B4 were unconscious when not in control, they had to communicate by leaving notes for each other. Control might switch from one to the other without warning, so the newcomer would find herself in a strange place with strange people. Each had her own friends and disliked the other's.

In addition to this struggle, B3, and B4 warred viciously on one another and tried to destroy each other by hypnotic tricks picked up from Prince. They tore up each other's correspondence. "Sally," to plague B4, would pile all the furniture on the bed and then change to B4. To spite B3, B4 simply went to sleep on the floor. When poor B1 awoke in charge of the body next morning, she had to put the furniture back.

B3 gained entrance to the thoughts of both the others and found out how to give them hallucinations. At night she made them see centipedes and horrible animals running about the bed. She caused B4, to be accompanied in the street by black-robed figures; to go into her apartment to find it draped in black; to think that her

hands or feet had been cut off.

Prince learned that the "original" Miss Beauchamp was personality B2, which appeared under hypnosis as a combination of B1 and B4. The first dissociation occurred in childhood, when B3 split off as a result of unhappy experiences. The second split, between B1, and B4, took place at the climax of an unhappy love affair. While Prince holds back the details with Victorian delicacy, we gather that her lover wanted something more than idealistic talk. Miss Beauchamp was terribly shocked.

After endless plots, deceptions, flights, threats, insults, and injuries among the three personalities. Prince suppressed B3, who could not be merged, and consolidated B1 and B4. The result was a normal girl, better fitted to meet life than any of the partial personalities.

THIS CASE sheds a flood of light on such phenomena as demoniac possession, mediumship, and reincarnationism. It also casts light on many doubtful matters on the borderland of science: hoaxes, cults, controversies, and doubtful testimonies, especially in such

fields as psychic and extra-sensory research.

It would seem that a man's simple testimony, not backed up by multiple witnesses or mechanical records like movies, is weaker than most people think. Be the man ever so seemingly sane and truthful, there is always the chance that he may harbor a sub-personality. This can get out of control and either fake the results of the experiment while the dominant personality is unconscious, or give the dominant personality hallucinations which are naively recorded as scientific facts.

Bernstein ignored all this well-established doctrine. He

ignored the fact that a hypnotic subject, in a real trance, does his best to please his hypnotist. If the hypnotist tells him to conjure up a former incarnation, the subject tries to invent one. And Bernstein does not seem to know that multiple personality is a mental disorder that can become serious if encouraged.

Moral: *Don't let any amateur fiddle with your mental works, any more than you'd let any amateur jerk your appendix.* It's tricky enough when a professional does it.



Just as medicine is not a science, but rather an art—a device, practised in a scientific manner, in its best manifestations—time-travel stories are not science fiction. Time-travel, however, has become acceptable to science fiction readers as a traditional device in stories than are otherwise admissible in the genre. Here, Frederik Pohl employs it to portray the awfully catastrophic meeting of three societies.

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The time had come for the great test. Would the Earthman be hailed as a god when he returned to these people?

GODLING, GO HOME!

by ROBERT SILVERBERG

(author of "The Songs of Summer")

LIEUTENANT CARTISSER moved around the small room in a series of swift, bird-like motions, packing up. The mission was completed.

When he got to the bulky logbook, lying spread out on the black wooden table, Cartisser turned to Private Noble, who was sitting in the far corner reading the Corps Handbook.

Cartisser tapped the log. "I hope you've got it all down here, Lew," he said. "Not so much for my sake, but your own—because you'll be out on one of these planets by yourself soon."

"As soon as I request separation, sir," Noble reminded him; "as soon as I'm ready."

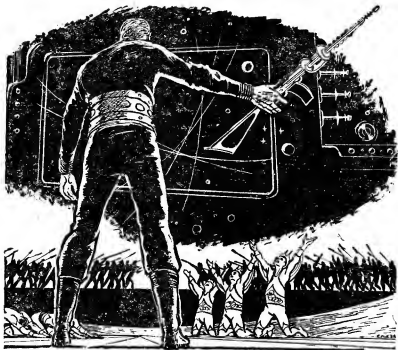
"As soon as you're ready,

then. But you'd better know the techniques; it may cost you your head otherwise."

Noble was a bony, pale young man. He had spent the entire mission in the little cabin, keeping a spybeam on Cartisser and studying the Lieutenant's methods in dealing with the natives. Noble was on his break-in cruise.

"It's all down here, sir," Noble said. Every move you made, from the time you put down in the middle of the city to the time you began the cultural leverage." He smiled confidently. "I'll be ready to go out on my own soon."

Cartisser continued to bustle around, packing up, and answered over his shoulder. "I hope so. All that's left for



you is to observe my Return techniques, and then you're entitled to ask for a commission and be shipped out. There's a skyfull of planets waiting for the new blood."

Cartisser finished loading the crates silently. When he was done, he turned to Noble once again. "I'm finished; give me a hand, will you?"

Noble put down the Handbook and caught a corner of

the heavy crate. Together they lifted it and carried it outside, and over to the camouflaged spaceship where it stood nestled in the violet-leaved shrubbery.

"YOU LOOK worried, sir," Noble observed, as he and Cartisser strapped themselves in and waited for blastoff clearance to come through from Central by sub-radio. "Are you afraid this

culture won't work out properly?"

"No," Cartisser said, smiling. "That's not what worries me; I did a good job here. I think I took care of that cannibalism pattern the way it had to be done—even if I do have to say it myself."

"I thought so too, sir."

"Thanks. But this planet isn't what's worrying me—it's the next."

"Tranacor?"

Cartisser nodded. "Tranacor. It's the first time I've gone back to a planet after setting it up. And I'm worried—about a lot of things."

CARTISSER studied his lean, anxious face in the control-panel mirror. At the beginning of the voyage, it had been Noble—raw, green Noble—who had had the anxious face. But now things were reversing; young Noble was growing daily in confidence, as he discovered his own capabilities by watching Cartisser in action. Cartisser was becoming more tense, more worried, as the time came closer to return to Tranacor.

Noble leaned back in his acceleration cradle. "What's the matter, sir? Or is this another of the things I'm supposed to find out for myself?"

"Half and half," said Cartisser, chuckling. "I'm worried about two things—the time-hop, and the reaction I'm going to get when I show up there, again. I can't predict how the Tranacai are going to react to me—and it's unpredictables that really eat into a man, you know."

"What sort of reaction do you expect?" Noble was frowning. He had been prying into the subject of return voyages for months, now, but Cartisser had always refused to give him the answers he needed.

"I don't know," Cartisser said. "I really don't know." He sat back, observing himself detachedly. The mounting tension was causing a tiny muscle in his left cheek to do a dizzy dance. He was worried, all right.

THE TIME-HOP was a big factor in his anxiety. It was a hop of five hundred years, and that made him uneasy—even though he had long since stopped worrying on a conscious level about his ever-increasing distance from 3108, the year of his birth. It was now 3518, but the Contraction had obligingly telescoped the five centuries into him.

Still, five hundred years in a mere thirty-nine years for

a single hop represented the largest single jaunt Cartisser had ever made, and somewhere on a subliminal level he was worrying about it. The assurance that Commander Jordan of Central and rookie Private Noble would both be making equivalent jumps at the same time kept Cartisser from any real fear; he knew that, come what may, he'd have some link with *now* when he completed his mission to Tranacor.

That was the second part: Tranacor. His first assignment had been to that planet, thirteen subjective years ago, when he'd been as green as the rookie he was now breaking in. And because it had been his first assignment, he had always remained more concerned about what happened to the Tranacai than about any of the other races he'd dealt with in his subsequent missions. Tranacor had been the first stop in a series that had brought Cartisser four hundred light years across space to Delta Canis Majoris IV. During that time, five hundred years had passed on Tranacor.

The return trip would use up five hundred more, thanks to the Contraction. This meant that a thousand years

would have passed among the Tranacai since he had left them, promising them he'd return in the distant future.

He rubbed his nose reflectively, and stared over at young Noble, who, as usual, looked puzzled, but not particularly tense. Cartisser wondered if the Tranacai would be glad to see him back.

AFTER A while, the signal came through. "Turn on the screen, Lew," Cartisser said.

Noble flicked on the screen; after the usual lemon-yellow swirl of interference, Commander Jordan's square-hewn features showed up on the viewer.

The Commander smiled. "All set, Lorne?"

"All set," Cartisser said. "Delta Canis was a snap. I think that Noble, here, could have handled them as easily as I did."

"Good to hear it; we're expecting great things from young Noble."

"I'm blasting off with him for Tranacor in half an hour," said Cartisser. "He's going to observe my Return technique. You?"

"I've turned the Command over to Ostwald," Jordan said. "The Extended Cultural Enrichment and Develop-

ment Expediting Corps is now in his hands, and he's welcome to it. My ship will leave shortly after yours, and I'll be heading for Earth as per plan. Get in touch with me after you're through with the Tranacai, yes? I'm curious to see how they work out."

"I will," Cartisser said stiffly.

"You're nervous," Jordan said. "You shouldn't be, boy. Think of me—you're just going to face a bunch of gray-skinned aliens. I'm going back to *Earth*—an Earth I haven't seen for more than a thousand years! Your problem's a snap compared to mine."

CARTISSER NODDED, glad that Jordan had broken the tension for him. "I'll buy that; but I'm still a little apprehensive about the sort of welcome I'll get."

"We're all interested," Jordan said, "but don't let it throw you. I was just as scared the first time I made a grand return to one of my planets, but all the doubts were over as soon as I got there. It's the doubt you must be feeling, right? They started worshiping me at once; I was almost a god to them. It all went over smooth-

ly. They were broken down with gratitude that I had come back to them."

"That's what I'm afraid of," Cartisser said.

"It must be a great feeling to be worshipped like that," said Noble.

Cartisser glanced angrily at him, then saw Jordan's hearty grin and said nothing. "I'll be calling you five hundred years from now," the Lieutenant said, after a moment.

"Right. Good luck," Jordan said crisply, and without waiting for any reply broke the connection.

Cartisser yawned. "We'll be ready to go any minute."

"Yes, sir," said Noble. The Private stared at the dwindling spot of yellow on the screen until it was gone, and then stared at the dull blackness of the screen itself. There was something worrying him, too, though he didn't let it show on his face the way Cartisser openly displayed his anxieties. Noble didn't worry what the time-hop would be like—he was too far from his own family now to care any more anyway. Nor was he much concerned with the Tranacai welcome; he was confident that Cartisser could handle any eventuality. No. Not

what nor *how* troubled him, but—*why*?

Private Noble sat back, awaiting the blasting signal, his brow furrowed in some of the deepest concentrating he'd done since leaving Earth to join the Corps. There was a gaping hole in the logical pattern that made up his life, and Cartisser's enigmatic answers had done nothing to fill in the riddle of *why*? for him.

THE SYSTEM was a simple one. It had evolved as soon as Earthmen had reached most of the nearby stars—and some of the farther ones—and had found that most of the stars had planets, and most of the planets were inhabited. They also found that the alien life was, without exception, hopelessly primitive in culture and technology.

The first half-dozen planets had all been willing to be taught, though; thus, the Cultural Enrichment and Development Corps had evolved, on the assumption that the myriad remaining planets would be likewise receptive.

It was a two-fold operation. A carefully-trained Earthman, pumped to the brim with the techniques of cultural development, would descend in a red blaze of

glory and announce who he was—an emissary from the skies, come down to lead the people to the greater wonders of Civilization. Generally, the assembled populace would accept him right away; if they didn't, he'd conjure up a few thoughtfully-arranged miracles and they'd change their minds soon enough.

Then followed an intense program of cultural assistance, in which the primitive peoples were set on the path to civilization by means of a carefully-designed series of formulas. The local Earthman would instill the desired values, teach a few rudimentary technological functions, and set up some sort of working religion which also so doubled as a governing body. The populace would generally regard their Earthman as a gigantic benevolent father-substitute which in some cultures became, by a natural process, a God-substitute as well.

ONCE THINGS were moving along smoothly on the path the Earthman plotted out, the local leader would bid his people a sad farewell and ascend to the heavens, whereupon he would head for some other planet and repeat the pro-

cess. The Corps had the whole operation down to a practically foolproof method.

Cartisser had followed a path straight across the galaxy to Delta Canis Majoris, setting up cultures successfully as he went. Noble had been shipped direct from Earth to hook up with Cartisser, and observe his technique before being sent out on assignments of his own.

They had gone to two planets together, Noble remaining hidden in a camouflaged cabin and watching Cartisser's operations by spybeam during the day. Cartisser would return in the evenings, when possible, and compare notes with him. After the two stops, Noble thought he knew the procedure of setting up a culture well enough to step out for himself.

But now came the second part of the operation—the illogical part that had logic-minded Noble asking, over and over again, without getting any satisfactory answer, *Why?*

CARTISSER was now four hundred light years away from his starting-point. Tranacor. The schedule now called upon him to make a long jump straight back to

Tranacor, and begin all over again. The effect of the Lortentz-Fitzgerald Contraction assured that a thousand years would have passed since his departure. He was going back to fulfill his promise—the promise made as prescribed in the Handbook—that he would return.

The Handbook, Noble knew, said that the purpose of the return visit was to see to it that Earth's superiority was maintained and re-established in the eyes of the natives, who were counting on fulfillment of the promise.

Fulfilling promises was one thing, Noble thought, but why the necessity to demonstrate Earth's superiority a second time? A mature society, Noble reflected, wouldn't see any need for that sort of childish showing off. They'd simply set the primitives on their way, and let them alone thenceforth.

Not return and flaunt their superiority again. It didn't figure, there was something wrong, and Cartisser wouldn't explain. "It's a test," was all he would say.

The buzzer clicked, and Cartisser nodded acknowledgment.

"Heading for Tranacor," he said curtly. He grinned nervously at Noble, and depressed the firing stud.

TRANACOR was a small, reasonably Earth-type world revolving around a reasonably Sol-type sun, and Cartisser had been happy at the coincidence; he knew that his first assignment in the Corps would have been awkward enough without the additional annoyance of surgical conditioning.

As he brought the two-man craft down neatly, in an obscure corner of the planet, Cartisser allowed himself a moment of sentimental recollection. He thought of the day, thirteen years before (a thousand!) when he had drawn Tranacor as his opening assignment, and he landed, brimming with confidence.

Now he was back again—but not so confidently. His fingertips were trembling with apprehension.

The Tranacai were peaceful people. The biggest of them just barely reached an Earthman's shoulder, and most were only about five feet high. They were humanoid, biped, with purple-gray skins, flaring seal-like nostrils, and a wondrously-inquisitive facial expression. Cartisser had liked them from the first, and had somehow always preferred them to the races he had encountered subsequently.

The landing was a good one. Cartisser stepped out warily and glanced around; then he beckoned to Noble, who descended the catwalk rapidly. The warm, sweet air of the little planet started filtering into their lungs. The air was the best part of Tranacor; the land itself was rough and scrubby, with twisted blue-leaved trees dotting the endless plains, and the little creatures really had to work to get any produce from it.

WHEN CARTISSER had arrived the first time, he had found the natives industriously scraping away by hand to plow their furrows. Cartisser had changed that. And, as he looked around, he saw that his labor had had effect; long, sweeping rows of the bitter-tasting grain that was the staple of the economy spread out as far as he could see. Before, there had been just scraggly clumps here and there in the farm regions.

"Should we start setting up the cabin?" asked Noble. "I'll go get the prefabs."

Cartisser, staring out, put a hand on the younger man's arm. "No, don't bother, Lew. Maybe this time we'll operate the spybeam hookup directly out of the ship, without

building a cabin. I may not be here long."

"But—" Noble started to protest, and then stopped. He had already learned that Cartisser generally knew what he was doing.

Cartisser stood there, staring at the bright yellow fields in the sunlight. He smiled. *It must be a great feeling to be worshipped*, Noble had said.

Well, they'd soon find out.

"Get the catapult down, Lew; I'll use that, I think."

Noble nodded, clambered back into the ship, and returned a moment later. They started setting up the catapult that was going to deposit Cartisser in the middle of Tranacor's biggest city, amid a shower of highly-impressive fireworks.

AS THE CATAPULT whistled him down through the atmosphere again into the capital city of Tranacor, Cartisser couldn't repress a wideyed hoot of amazement. Muldonah, the capital "city," had been a conglomeration of dreary mudflats when he'd left. Now, he saw buildings stretching out to the horizon, buzzing vehicles shooting back and forth, and gray hordes of Tranacai streaming around busily below.

And right in the heart of the city was a towering statue of an Earthman. Cartisser knew who it was, and felt a warm glow spread through him. Noble was right; it was a great feeling, even though an ominous one.

Just before his final farewell, he had told the High President—a man named Ebli whom he hand-picked—that he would return to Tranacor someday, probably about a thousand years hence. He was keeping that promise.

He plunged down through the sky, trailing bright red sparks behind, and managed to land just at the base of the giant statue. Even the landing jets didn't sufficiently cushion his feet against the impact of the surprisingly-solid pavement, and the drop hurt. Cartisser winked momentarily to show the watching Noble, back at the ship, that he was all right, and then hastily shucked off the catapult harness. He stepped to one side, just in time. The catapult burst into flames and the jets took it up to the sky, in a properly spectacular finale to his landing. He was back.

Cartisser looked around. The people were running up from all over the street, dashing toward the statue as fast

as their splay-footed feet would take them. He squinted up, caught the pose of the statue—it was a remarkably fine likeness—and stood there majestically, with his profile outlined sharply against the clean white stone of the statue.

THERE WAS NO prescribed technique for re-establishment of contact, as there was for making a first landing on a planet. He was going to have to play by ear, for the duration of his stay.

His fingers trembled a little, but he held the pose, feet spread, arm up, palm facing outward and upward. A hum from his suit told him that the amplifier was warmed up, and from force of habit he cleared his throat. The sound went booming all over the city.

Then, feeling faintly ridiculous, he said, sonorously, "O my people, I have returned."

He hoped the language hadn't changed *too* much in ten centuries; he had thoughtfully included a prohibition against linguistic reform, when he'd drawn up their code the first time, with just this eventuality in mind. Their language was direct and efficient anyway,

and didn't need much changing.

The echoes of his voice-ricocheted back from the amazingly well-built skyscrapers all around, and he waited for the sound to stop bouncing before he spoke again. He could see the expressions of awe on the trusting faces of the Tranacai. They were all herded together in a tightly-packed semicircle, facing him, looking up, and their wide, lidless eyes reflected utter adoration and astonishment. They were muttering his name, over and over again, in their gentle, liquid voices.

Cartisser stood there, watching them worship him, feeling a sense of deep futility sweep over him. This reaction was the most predictable of the possibilities he had envisioned.

BACK AT the ship, the watching Noble drank it all in, identifying himself with Cartisser, thinking how wonderful it must be to be worshipped that way. Then a hot burst of shame came flooding to his face. *No!* he thought sharply, as he saw Cartisser nodding in acknowledgement of the hosannahs. *It's wrong!*

And then that insistent *Why, why?* began pounding

away in Noble's head again. *Why* did the Corps Handbook insist on this comic-opera return voyage? *Why*?

Private Noble shook his head, it made no sense.

He saw Cartisser put up his other hand for silence, and once again the Lieutenant cleared his throat. "My prophecy is fulfilled," he said. "I promised I would return, and I have returned." He said the last three words slowly, extracting every possible bit of dramatic force from them.

The assemblage was overcome with joy; some of the aliens were down on their stubbly knees, and a few were crowding close, hoping to touch his foot.

Cartisser wondered just how this operation was going to unfold from here. The first logical step was to get to see the local big cheese and find out exactly what had taken place on Tranacor in the years of his absence. Orientation was always the first rule on a strange planet.

"Take me to the High President," the Lieutenant said, hoping they were still calling their big man by that title—a title Cartisser had chosen.

BEFORE ANYONE could do anything, Cartisser

saw the thickly-packed throng give way and split; down the aisle thus formed marched a tall, grim-looking Tranacai in richly embroidered golden robes. He strode forcefully up to Cartisser. "I am the High President. O Cartisser. You may come with me."

Good service, thought Cartisser, a little surprised.

The High President spun neatly on his heel and started back up the aisle, heading for a vehicle parked outside the edge of the crowd. His automobile—for such it was—was gloriously ornamented, so covered with gingerbread of one kind or another that it was almost impossible to make out the lines of the thing. And on the door, laid on in some expensive-looking white metal, was the thunderbolt-sign that Cartisser had established as his personal symbol. It was obviously a sign of office.

Private Noble, frowning, adjusted the sharp focus of the spybeam to take in Cartisser's every action.

The High President paused halfway up the aisle and turned. "Please come quickly," he said in an impatient tone of voice, the sort one might use to a dawdling schoolboy. Lieutenant Car-

tisser followed him obediently through the adoring throng, and Noble saw the shadow of a strange smile flickering around Cartisser's lips. Noble shook his head, thinking that this was a very odd way indeed to welcome a returning Earthman.

THE HIGH PRESIDENT'S office was in an imposing mansion not far from the centrally-located Cartisser statue. As they drove slowly through the streets, Cartisser noticed little replicas of the great statue of himself in front of every door, and the thunderbolt sign seemed to be equally common. These things pleased him, for they testified to the impress his teachings had left on the planet.

The High President led him into the big building, up a winding staircase, and through a corridor into his office, on the eighth floor.

"In here, please," the High President said. His voice was thoroughly businesslike; evidently he was well prepared for the occasion. He sounded as if he had probably been waiting all his life for Cartisser's advent.

The office was luxuriously appointed, with soft, thick drapes on the walls and a

handsome rug on the floor. Every wall and every item of furniture was ornamented with every possible kind of decorative scrawl; apparently the Tranacai had reached that pre-functional stage in their esthetic development where they regarded over-decoration as an ideal, and blank space with abhorrence.

"Sit down, O Cartisser," the High President said crisply. Cartisser took a seat facing the window, from which he could see the huge figure looming over the square. Its features, he observed, were set in an expression of almost incredible spirituality.

NOBLE FOLLOWED Cartisser's glance and saw the statue. He felt himself growing more confused, especially now that he saw Cartisser was so calm. His own confusion increased in direct proportion to the older man's glacial poise.

The Lieutenant had told him how primitive these people had been, a thousand years before. Now they appeared to have everything firmly in hand—including Cartisser.

The High President sat down facing the Lieutenant and stared at him for a long, uncomfortable moment. His

flared nostrils rose outward and sank back together with each intake and exhalation. Finally he reached for a small image of Cartisser and moved it forward on the desk between them. "This," the alien said, "is you."

Cartisser took the statue in one hand, hefted it, and nodded. "I have returned in fulfillment of my promise of old," he said.

The Tranacai drew in his lips in that puckering expression Cartisser knew was a frown. "I'm aware of that. We have never ceased to believe, since the day of your departure, that one of these days you would return. It has been my most melancholy torment to contemplate the day you actually did return, today is a tragic day for us."

"Tragic?" said Cartisser. Noble, a silent, disembodied observer, blinked in amazement.

"If you had only not come back!" the alien said passionately. "If you had only remained in the skies, wherever you live—and not returned!"

NOBLE SHOOK his head, dimly conscious that something was wrong. By all accounts, the Tranacai should be bowing in gratitude; certainly Cartisser had no bus-

iness letting the alien talk to him this way.

"I am here to continue my work," said Cartisser. His mouth was drawn into a tight slit. "I have new things for you, new developments, new techniques to teach—"

"No! That is precisely why you must not stay. The people love and remember you, and they will allow you to reassume control. They think you are a supernatural figure." The Tranacai smiled confidentially. "I realize that you are merely long-lived. But they do not see how wrong it would be to let you take over."

Wrong? Noble thought. But the Handbook—

"You want me to leave, then," Cartisser said quietly.

"Please," said the High President. "Immediately. You have fulfilled your prophecy, and returned to your people. What I propose is that you deliver a public blessing, tell everyone how wonderfully we've progressed, and leave at once."

Noble watched Cartisser sit back in his chair, with that strange not-quite-smile curling around his lips. Cartisser drummed on the desk with his fingertips.

"You realize," he said, "that I did not complete my

mission the first time—which is why I'm back."

"No," the alien said. "*Your task is finished.* When you departed, you left the reins of government in the hands of your Vicar Ebli I—my illustrious ancestor. Those reins must remain where you placed them."

CARTISSER FROWNED. "Justify that," he snapped.

Now he's arguing, Noble thought. Why doesn't he pass a miracle? Why is he just taking it like that? He's degrading Earth forever...

"Fair enough," said the alien, "your presence here violates the terms of your own teachings."

"How so?"

"You specified, as the basic tenet of our society, *liberty* ... Self-determination."

"True," said Cartisser. He had; before he had come, the Tranacai had been locked into a hard-and-fast system of slavery, which he had managed to break down fairly easily when he changed the economic structure of their society. He had stressed the importance of self-determination.

"You made a prediction," the High President said, "it has been fulfilled. We have no room for prophets from

the skies. As such, you represent a threat to the liberty of Tranacor, for you will tell us what *is going to happen*. We must not know that, we must be free to decide for ourselves. You told us that with your own voice, long ago."

Cartisser smiled. The alien had reasoned well, they had followed his own code so faithfully that there was no longer any room for him on Tranacor. A prophet was the same as a tyrant, so far as the Tranacia could tell, and they had no use for tyrants—or prophets either, by extension. They saw no distinction between one and the other.

Even Noble saw the logic of that. The High President, wisely, was aware that the people would probably be overjoyed to have Cartisser dictate to them again, and thereby undo the work of ten centuries. Therefore, the alien was making a private request that Cartisser leave.

It makes sense, Noble thought, from their viewpoint. But is the Lieutenant going to let them throw us out like this?

CARTISSER looked at the alien. The High President was sitting here, receding jaw set in firmly, gog-

gly green eyes glinting in a manner that revealed a strength which hadn't been present in the race ten centuries before.

"You've got no place for me?" Cartisser said a second time.

"None at all. As I said, your work is complete; you have left the administration in our hands, and it must remain there to fulfill your own commands."

"Here is a paradox," Cartisser said. "I commanded you to be free, and so you are removing the source of command in order to insure its fulfillment."

"This is our position," the High President said bluntly.

"It seems absurd," said Cartisser, mildly; but on the second thought, it makes sense." He stood up. "All right, I'll leave."

What? Noble though in amazement.

"This is a great burden off my shoulders," the alien said. "I had feared that you would insist on continuing your work here. In that case it would have been very tragic for us.

WHEN CARTISSER returned to the ship, Noble was waiting, absolutely blankfaced with bewilder-

ment. Cartisser had delivered a resounding speech in the square surrounding the statue, speaking fulsomely and long, making clear that he had come down from the skies only to see to it that his program was being carried out in the right way. All was well, he went on to declare, thanks to the fine work of the current High President—whose name, Cartisser discovered, was Ebli XXX11.

Then he had gone up to the top of the statue and, using the small suit-jets, had made a second properly fiery farewell. As he looked down he saw the distant, small gray face of Ebli XXX11 below him. The High President was smiling in obvious relief at having gotten Cartisser off his hands so quickly.

When he returned to the ship, the lieutenant was grinning broadly. "I suppose you saw the whole thing," he said.

"I certainly did!" said Noble. "Of all the ingratitude—to throw you out like that, after all you've done for them! And you let them do it, sir! You let them do it."

"Ingratitude?" Cartisser repeated reflectively. "Now, why—? Yes, I guess you could call it that, couldn't you? They rejected me, after all I did for them." He nod-

ded. "Yes. Ungrateful wretches, weren't they?"

"But I don't understand, sir," Noble said miserably. "What are you going to do now? Just leave them?"

"That's what Ebli told me to do, isn't it?"

"But the Handbook—the re-establishment of Earth superiority—aren't you—"

"No," said Cartisser. "I failed in my mission. I'm going to call Jordan and report this—this failure. Then we set out for Kyron, the next port of call. Maybe *they'll* kick me out too."

IT SEEMED to Noble that there was a trace of bitterness in Cartisser's voice, wholly belied by the untroubled expression of the Lieutenant's face. Feeling impossibly green and bewildered, Noble asked, "And what then, sir?"

"Then? Then, it's on to the next, for me—and perhaps you'll go off on your own by then, if you think you'll be ready to separate from me." He turned to the subradio and started setting up the coordinates that would get him in touch with Commander Jordan once again, on Earth.

After some difficulty, he succeeded in getting through to Jordan.

"Well? How'd it go?" the

Commander asked, without preamble.

"Complete failure," Cartisser said, speaking much too lightly to suit Noble. "Utter and miserable failure."

Jordan's eyes brightened. "I don't know quite how to take that, Lorne; be less ambiguous."

Cartisser glanced at Noble and said, "I mean it literally: They booted me out. The High President made it clear that he had no use for me, and I left. Noble here saw the whole thing."

"Failure," Jordan crowed. "Our first total failure! How wonderful! Wait till Central finds out." His face was glowing triumphantly. "Brilliant work, Lorne. I'm glad you're the first of us to break through; you deserve it."

"Thank you, sir," said Cartisser. "Will you report it Commander Jordan? I'll file my report through channels, of course, but I think Central should know immediately."

"Of course," Jordan said, "I'll get in touch with them now. And congratulations, once again, I knew we'd do it eventually." He broke the contact.

CARTISSER WATCHED the screen go blank, and then turned to Noble. The thin recruit was standing be-

hind him, with a look of complete befuddlement on his face.

"Tell me, sir," Noble said, slowly, almost timidly. "*Why* is there so much fuss being made over this—failure? I may seem ignorant, but—"

Carterisser sat down and began unlacing his boots. "It was the most complete, utter, and devastating failure of mission in the whole history of the Corps. I was received with utmost ingratitude, and booted out. Right?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. In every other return voyage," Carterisser said slowly, "the returning Corpsman has been hailed frantically and welcomed with open arms—the reigning priesthood promptly turns the whole shebang over to him, and they're glad of it. On one planet I won't name, one of our boys made his return flight eight subjective years ago, and found himself deluged with so much responsibility that I don't think he'll ever get off the planet again. Or rather, ever *did* get off, since that time-jump we made left him five hundred years back. But you see the pattern: *everywhere*, there's been a triumphant reaffirmation of the Earthman's strength, and the

priesthood has immediately placed the whole government right back in his hands."

"Except in your case," Noble pointed out. "You were rejected."

"Exactly. I was rejected, I failed. It was just your luck to draw a lemon as your break-in man," Carterisser said.

NOBLE MOVED to the Lieutenant's side with a look of deep sympathy on his face. "Don't let it get you, sir. So what? So what if you didn't succeed? What does it matter?"

"What's that, Lew?"

"If we handled this aid program like adults," said Noble bitterly, "there wouldn't be any return voyages."

Carterisser stood up again. "There's your mistake, son, that's what may keep you out of the Corps."

"What, sir?" Noble's face turned even whiter than usual.

"You ought to be clicking your heels with joy over my washout here. That is, if you know what the Corps was all about. But you don't—and if you can't figure it out soon enough, you may be in trouble."

Noble shook his head dizzily. He admitted to himself that he did not know the pur-

pose of the Corps—though he thought he did, at one time—and could not solve the riddle that had been puzzling him since he had entered.

"Sir, I—"

"Let's look at it slowly," Cartisser said, "I didn't get it either, on my break-in cruise. But it's simple enough."

"Well," Noble said helplessly, "You're all excited because you failed to re-establish Earth's superiority. But that's just what I don't—"

"FORGET THE re-establishing," Cartisser snapped. "I went to Tranacor the second time with just one hope in mind: *that I be thrown out*, as fast as I showed my face. And they did it. That's the big achievement."

"Getting rejected?" Noble said. "I feel half-sure of what's going on, but I can't put the pieces together."

"Look. I was rejected—that's the only datum you have. Very well—what did you think the Corps was doing? Building a Galactic Empire for Earth? We've been trying to *develop* these races, not exploit them. And to develop them, we've got to set them up on their own feet. There. Over to you."

Noble's face creased in a

wide grin. "I see it now," he said eagerly. "Whatever you taught them when you were there, plus whatever natural qualities the Tranacai themselves had, succeeded in turning the trick. For the first time we—the Corps, I mean—strengthened a race to the point where it no longer needs us, where it can take over for itself, without further external guidance!"

The answer to the riddle had broken through to Noble, and he was practically glowing with the new knowledge. The realization of the true purpose of the Corps sent a chill running down his back. "I see the picture. It's a *test*, all right, the race that kicks its Earthman out passes the test. When you went in there, the very thing you were hoping for was the last thing I expected. You *wanted* them to be ungrateful; it's the first step in growing up."

CARTISSER was smiling broadly. Noble looked at him. "What about the other races you've been to, sir?"

"We'll know soon enough. It won't necessarily follow that they'll pass the test; their genetic makeup has more to do with it than whatever I was able to implant in them by teaching."

"I see." Noble fell silent for a moment, and then, as a new thought struck him, he started to laugh.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing, sir. It's only that—I had been afraid to request separation and commission, because I didn't want to hurt your feelings by going out on my own too soon, but now I see there's no point staying with you anymore. I've been tested, too," Noble said, chuckling. "But I'm going to reject you; I'm going to be ungrateful also. This is the last trip we're making together, sir. The next time out we'll go our separate ways."

Carterisser nodded. "You'll do now," he said. He started setting up the blasting pattern on the jets. "Welcome to the Corps. We've succeeded

once, and that's a step toward our goal of a galaxy full of independent races, but that's only one success. We need more, infinitely more. People like you and me are going to supply them." He frowned. "We're not even sure of the one success we have, you know."

"You mean there's a chance of failure on Tranacor even now?"

Carterisser strapped himself down. "Of course," he said. He reached out and let his finger hover over the firing stud. As he started to push down, he said, "This may be only a false development, Lew. We won't be sure until—until they start sending out missionaries of their own. Then we'll *know* we've accomplished something!"



3 SUSPENSEFUL MYSTERIES

FATAL WEDDING

by Frederick C. Davis

ASHES TO ASHES

by Randall Garrett

THE NEIGHBOR

by Richard Dcming

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Readin' and Writhin'

Book Reviews by RANDALL GARRETT

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF SPACE TRAVEL by Albro T. Gaul. Illustrated by Virgil Finlay, and including an album of historical space travel art prepared by Sam Moskowitz. World Publishing Co. \$4.95, 159 pp.

Mr. Gaul's book is divided into three parts, and this Caesarian operation has resulted in the birth of a monster. It is a queer book, to say the least, and the most I can say for it is that it has some very pretty pictures in it. Virgil Finlay seems to have done his best with the prose he had to work with, and the illustrations are just as fanciful as the "science" in the text.

Exactly what audience the author was aiming for is unclear; it doesn't seem quite suitable for children, although an intelligent layman would think it childish.

Perhaps it is meant for the *un*-intelligent layman—in which case, it will sell no better than it deserves.

To begin with, it is full of loaded, dogmatic statements. The very first sentence in the book, on Page 7, reads:

The first space pilot has already been born.

No qualifiers; no "possibly", not even "I believe". It is stated as a fact, brother, and please don't argue.

Or, try this one:

Without doubt, both he (the space pilot) and his parents listen to radio and television programs dealing with much space adventure but with very few accurate facts. (Italics mine. R. G.)

And, a little later on:

Space travel is already here. Flying saucers are probably indicative

of space travel by a race other than ours.

That is the attitude the author takes throughout the book. Some of the most fanciful speculation is stated as fact. He builds up theories with utter solemnity, leaping from unwarranted assumption to foregone conclusion like a drunken flea on a hot stove.

The trouble is that, superficially, the book *sounds* as though it were based on the latest theories. An average person who had skimmed lightly over the works of Wernher von Braun or Willy Ley might very conceivably think that Albrow T. Gaul is in the same class.

He is not. In spite of the fact that he has a B. S. degree, according to the biographical sketch in the back of the book, he appears to have only a very light grasp of the sciences of physics and astronomy.

For example, on Page 18, he tells how a space rocket cuts off its motors after attaining escape velocity. The he says:

The ship is now in an elliptical orbit with earth as one center. This is the condition which is known as "free fall". It is not really falling at all but is the situation in which gravitational effects seem to have dwindled to nothing.

If a ship is in an elliptical orbit about the Earth, it has *not* reached escape velocity. Ellipses do not have "centers", they have *foci*, which are something else again. And "free fall" really *is* falling, in every sense of the word. A falling object does not have to

hit anything when it falls. Any mass follows the path of least gravitational resistance; when that resistance is zero — when the body is not fighting gravity — it is falling.

Besides such flubs as that, Mr. Gaul has another trick. By the simple tactic of changing a scientific statement such as "It is *possible* that Such-and-such is Thus-and-so" to "We *know* that Such-and-such is Thus-and-so", the author misleads the reader.

Despite what Mr. Gaul says, we do not "*know*" that there are plants on Mars, that animals evolved before plants, or that all intelligent life must be warm-blooded and bilaterally symmetrical. Such things have varying probabilities, but they are by no means positive knowledge.

The crowning glory of the whole conglomeration is Section Three, "Host to the Alien", which deals—believe it or not—with how to be nice to an alien and how to observe flying saucer landings.

I wish I could quote the whole thing here, but a few examples of absurdities will have to do.

Page 122:

Why are these visitors coming to earth? To wage war? To tyrannize the world with the dictatorial powers of a superior technology? No! We can only think that they are doing just what we would be doing on a first trip to a new world. They are on a scientific expedition.

Columbus was on a scientific
(turn to page 120)

Again and again the Major wondered why a man had been selected for an important job of sabotage for which he had no heart. And it wasn't that they didn't know that he rebelled at the thought of destroying this spaceship...



MISSION TO THE ENEMY

by IRVING COX, JR.

(author of "Crossroad")

illustrated by ORBAN

THE AUXILIARY boat from the submarine moved soundlessly into the shallows, where ribbons of fog curled in the cold darkness. The oarsman signaled; the Major slid over the side and waded ashore. When he looked back, the boat was gone. They had allowed him just forty-eight hours before he must rendezvous with it again.

And he had almost no chance of making it. The Major knew that: he was an ama-

teur caught in a strangling web of espionage. But the mission was his; Security had made the assignment. Why, the Major did not know. For some reason—clear, perhaps, in the tangled multi-layered levels of their logic—Security considered him the only man who could do the job.

The cold ate numbly into his soggy boots as he climbed up the bank to the road. The rock was volcanic, and it pricked painfully at the palms of his hands. He

pushed through a waist high mass of weeds. He saw the broken fence and, vaguely, the cliffs rising on the land side of the highway.

It was exactly as the Old Man had described it. This was the place; this was the time. The network of espionage would now take over, functioning like a precision machine, all for one purpose—so that he could deliver the bomb and destroy the finest achievement of enemy science.

The Major winced inwardly. He hated what he must do. He would obey, of course—obedience was part of his code—but he would be fighting himself all the way, fighting an inner desire to fail. The Major felt scornfully aloof from parties and ideologies—the semantic tripe dreamed up by the collective, adolescent idiocy of mankind. A sleek, slim ship, poised hopefully for proud flight into space—that was the Major's god. And Security had sent him to kill the thing he worshiped.

Why had the Old Man selected him? He knew the results of the psych tests; he knew how the Major felt.

THE MAJOR walked stiffly along the shoulder of the road—fifty paces, as he

had been instructed. He whistled the first bar of the operatic aria he had been taught.

In the darkness a motor sputtered, and a black, battered coupe slid out of the concealment of the brush. As the car came abreast of the Major, the door swung open and the Major leaped into the seat.

The driver snapped on the headlights. The coupe swung into a recklessly high speed along the twisted, deserted highway, and the Major saw the driver's face reflected faintly in the light. He was a young man, thin, hollow-cheeked, with a stubble of beard on his chin. His eyes were wide and protruding; they held the stare of a fanatic.

Unconsciously the Major's lip curled. This was the kind of person he must work with; the successful machine of espionage had to be built of fanatics, for only a man slightly mad could be a consistent traitor. An uneasy contrast worked at the Major's mind: The fanatic was a traitor, and the Major was a patriot—yet they had the same objective. Somehow, that was wrong; The Major felt subtly compelled to work out a logical answer—and it was impossible to do.

He was aware that he was

becoming too subjective. He was personalizing the problem—one of his worst psychological failings. The Old Man had told the Major once that he thought too much. In considering the entangled side-issues that arose in relation to any question, the Major had the peculiar knack of thinking himself into hopeless inactivity.

"A scientific mind such as yours," the Old Man had said—not unkindly, "sometimes works like that—which is why you must take orders from a practical and unimaginative man like myself. I'm not a genius, Major; I know what we want to do, but I haven't the brains to grasp all the pitfalls you can visualize. If the subsidiary issues interfere too much, we stop and solve them; if not, what difference does it make?"

IT WAS an admirable philosophy of action. But in the end what did it come to, except this bitter assignment of childish vengeance? The political issue had been carefully explained to the Major—the enemy must not be allowed to reach space first, or they would lay claim to the universe. But, reducing the decorative abstractions of the politicians to simple terms, the Major saw his mission as

one of pure spite and nothing else. Perhaps, if the Old Man had not ignored so often the scientific side-issues in the problem, the Major's people might have produced the first workable ship—not the enemy.

For some miles the black coupe raced on screaming tires along the coast highway, and neither man spoke. The Major felt the paralysis of indecision creeping into his mind—and that would be fatal. This mission demanded action; there was no time for the subtle weighing of factors—of the rightness or wrongness of what the Major had to do.

HE TURNED toward the driver, and asked, "Will you take me directly to the field?" His syntax was precise and formal, in the language of the enemy. The Major could read it with ease, and speak it with very little accent—which was, he thought, the reason why they had selected him for the mission. But he was unfamiliar with the idiomatic slang of the native.

"To the field?" the driver repeated. "I don't know why you're here—and I'm not allowed to ask; I'm just the pick-up man. When your people put an agent ashore, I

make the contact and drive him to the farm. That's the end of it for me. It's better that way; if the police pick me up, I can't squeal—no matter what they do."

"Everything has gone smoothly so far, don't you think?"

The driver said nothing.

After a long pause, the Major added, "That is, you met me at the proper time and place which indicates—but I suppose all the agents are put ashore here."

"I wouldn't know," the driver said expressionlessly.

"It seems an ideal spot; we've been driving for a quarter of an hour, and we haven't passed any other traffic."

"This isn't a well-traveled road." Even that statement of the obvious was cautiously phrased. The Major recognized the obsession of the fanatic—the quirk that made this man an ideal traitor: a mistrust of everyone, even of the people he had dedicated himself to serve.

After an uncomfortable silence, the Major spoke again, "You mentioned a farm; is that where I meet the others?"

"You ask a lot of questions."

"How much farther is it?"

"I'll tell you when we get there."

THERE was no point in trying to continue such a pointless conversation. The Major reluctantly looked inward again, facing the seething mass of his own thinking, the slow paralysis of the problem in ethics. The Old Man had often said to him, "Don't concern yourself so much with consequences, Major. That's tomorrow's problem; for all you know, you may not live to see it."

Against his will, the Major abruptly remembered his last talk with the Old Man, as they had walked through the naval yard to the submarine which would carry the Major to his midnight rendezvous on the enemy beach.

"The information that Security has is conclusive," the Old Man had said. "The enemy has completed a space ship, and they're ready to blast off."

"Sir, if we could just lay our hands on their power technique—"

"Security will deliver that to us in time, but right now we have to make sure their ship doesn't leave the ground."

"Why? The universe is large enough to hold us both."

"Not if they claim it first."

"That's impossible, sir," the Major protested; "they

couldn't make such a fantastic claim stick."

The Old Man shook his head. "You and I don't make top-level decisions, Major; we're military men."

"Scientists," the Major corrected. "To me the military use of a space ship is far less important than the problem of design and power, and—"

NATURALLY, it would seem so to you; but never forget that our research labs could not have stayed open without military appropriations. You solve your paper problems—your intriguing puzzles in calculus—but they must be paid off in a tactical superiority of weapons. For three generations, the world has had a form of diplomatic peace—which is the most costly kind of war man has ever fought. The planet and its resources are almost equally divided between the enemy and ourselves; neither of us dares fight openly until we have weapons that will give us at least a chance of victory.

"The space ship is the only possible way to break the stalemate. If they get it first, they can convert the moon into an armed fortress in the sky, forever hung above our heads. No weapon we might make could counteract that."

The two men came to the long pier above the submarine pens. Sailors snapped to attention. The Major returned their salute uncomfortably; he was wearing his uniform for the first time. Ten years ago, the research laboratories had been converted into a military project. For a decade the Major had secretly laughed at the title they had given him. It still seemed very foolish.

The Major spoke softly to the Old Man. "Why are you repeating all this nonsense about the armed peace and a moon fortress? The politicians tell us that; they don't know—and we don't know—that it's true. We don't even know that our weapons on the moon could be effective against much of anything except passing meteorites."

"But we can't afford the risk of—"

"That's still what the politicians say! It isn't what you believe yourself, sir."

"They're our superior officers, Major; we do as we're told."

"So you volunteer my name," the Major said bitterly, "to go and bomb the ship the enemy has built—because we haven't the brains to finish our own."

"AS A MATTER of fact," the Old Man admitted,

"I had to do a great deal of persuasion before Security would accept my point of view. In the beginning, they were going to send one of their own men, a professional saboteur. I convinced them he'd bungle—"

"You insisted on sending me?" the Major asked incredulously. This was the first time the Old Man had told him that part of the negotiations. Hitherto, the Major had believed that the insistence had all come from Security.

"Of course, Major; a professional wouldn't know where to put the bomb to do the maximum damage."

"But why—why pick me?" the Major gasped. "You know how I feel; you know—"

"I understand how important the ship is to you, Major. No other man could be trusted to do the job right—the job that must be done. Yours is no routine mission." The Old Man spoke slowly, with a strange emphasis the Major did not understand. "You carry tomorrow in your hands, Major; never forget that." The Old Man shook hands. His face was oddly serious; there was a mist of tears in his eyes.

THE MAJOR sat in the black coupe, beside the

thin-faced fanatic, and tried again to understand the Old Man—the practical, hard-headed realist who solved his problems without feeling any concern for the consequences or pitfalls. He knew the Major; they had worked closely together for a decade. Yet the Old Man had deliberately chosen the Major to destroy the enemy space ship; it made no sense.

After an hour, the coupe turned off the coast road. They followed a rough, narrow highway through the hills. When the car reached the crest of a pass, the Major saw the lights of a village in a bowl-shaped valley below. The coupe came to a stop in the shrub-sheltered drive of a ramshackle farm, on the outskirts of the town.

A slatternly, gray-faced woman, wearing a faded robe, met the Major in a dimly lighted hall. The driver of the coupe spoke to her for a moment in a whisper. After that he disappeared—back into the rotting, social woodwork that bred his kind; the Major never saw the pick-up man again.

The woman gestured for the Major to follow her into the kitchen. It was a large, brown-walled room, cluttered with unwashed dishes, laundry hanging on a network of

lines above the stove, and a painter's material scattered untidily on a card table beside an easel. The woman pushed a pile of mending from a chair and told the Major to sit down. She slapped the parts of a coffee pot together and rattled it on the stove. "They'll pick you up on about an hour," she explained.

"How far is it to the field?"

"I don't know anything about any field," she answered disinterestedly. "I put you up till they come, that's all. You aren't supposed to talk."

HHE SMILED. "I thought your people—"

"You're an amateur at this. aren't you, Mister?"

"Definitely; I'll need a lot of help. You see, I'm a scientist working on—"

"The first thing you have to get through your head is to keep your mouth shut." The crooked slit of her mouth curled in a sneer. "They always send an amateur over when it's a big job. I guess, maybe, they don't trust us to do it right."

"I'm sorry if it's an inconvenience."

"Inconvenience?" She laughed coarsely. "It usually ends up in a hell of a mess for everybody." She shrugged her thin shoulders, and turned toward the stove to

test the coffee. "But it doesn't make any difference to me; I just do what the boss says."

When the coffee was brewed, she filled a chipped, pottery mug and handed it to the Major. Then she sat down in front of the easel, turning back the cloth hung in front of the canvas. The Major saw a partly-finished oil of a barnyard scene—a painting totally devoid of style or composition, crude even in its slavish copying of photographic detail. As the woman began to work at it, her personality was transformed by the magic of her dream of adulation as an artist.

She chattered animatedly, about her art, subconsciously begging the Major for praise. He understood, then, why she was a recruit for sabotage, a willing traitor to her people. They had rejected her art and it was a fundamental element in her delusion that they had done so through envy—not as a valid judgment of her work.

The Major pitied the woman, and he felt disgust with Security for making use of such people. Again the unanswerable question loomed large in his mind: what divided the traitor from the patriot? It shook his confidence in himself to know that he and this unfortunate woman

were working for the same goal.

AT DAWN, a purring limousine came to a stop outside the farmhouse. The woman put aside her brush and handed the Major over to a pair of large, granite-faced men. They gave him new clothes to wear—a dark, double-breasted business suit identical to their own. For the first time since he had landed, the Major took off his soggy boots and slipped his feet into dry socks and oxfords.

He rode alone in the back seat of the limousine. The two men sat in the front, with the dividing window closed behind them so that the Major could not hear what they said when they talked. For more than eight hours the Major rode in the car. The two men stopped once to eat, but they did not ask the Major to join them. They brought him four sandwiches, and a container of coffee, when they returned to the car.

Late in the afternoon the limousine turned up the drive of a large estate in the outskirts of a city. The two men took the Major into a luxuriously-furnished library and left him alone. The Major examined the room with in-

terest. He was obviously in the home of a wealthy man, an important man; it surprised him that anyone so fixed should be part of the network of traitors. He wondered what could have driven such a man to betray his nation.

FROM AN adjoining room, a voice suddenly became audible—a man engaged in a telephone conversation. It was a deep, arrogant voice, booming with confidence.

"You will have the Captain here at five." Pause. "For a mission as important as this, it is entirely proper that I should offer congratulations." Pause, and an abrupt note of caution. "There must be photographers, I suppose; we can't get away from that. But keep them outside. And absolutely no pictures when the Captain leaves here for the field."

While the man was still talking, a woman came into the room where the Major was waiting. He turned toward her, and she gestured imperiously. "Stay in the light, so I can see your face." She held a photograph in her hand and studied it carefully. "There is a superficial resemblance, I suppose, though we could have done better ourselves." She frowned. "I

thought that was their reason for sending you."

"Resemblance?" he asked.

"Sit down, please; I'll have to get busy right away."

"I don't understand—"

"He'll explain when he's ready."

The Major sat in a straight-backed chair facing the window and the afternoon sunlight. The woman spread a large towel across his chest. She brought an elaborate make-up kit and opened it beside his chair, propping the colored photograph on a metal stand so that she could refer to it.

OBVIOUSLY, she intended to make the Major resemble the picture as closely as possible. Why, he didn't know—and when he asked, she made no reply. She worked painstakingly for more than an hour, trimming his hair, working the right shade of dye into it, building up the contour of his face with a skin putty. When she was satisfied that she had done the best she could, she took him to a bedroom on the second floor and told him to put on a uniform that hung over the back of a chair. It was the regulation uniform worn by a Captain in the enemy air fleet; at last the Major understood how they in-

tended to smuggle him into the field.

The woman brought a stout, balding, middle-aged man to see the finished product. He stood at the bedroom door for a moment surveying the Major with glittering eyes. Then he smiled and said, "Remarkably accurate, my dear."

"Of course I could do nothing about the color of the eyes, or—"

"They'll never notice that at night; it's the overall impression that counts." The Major recognized the voice: this was the arrogant man whose telephone conversation he had overheard.

The woman departed and the fat man moved closer to the Major. He made no effort to shake hands, but began to talk in a strident scornful tone. "You will remain here in this room until we're ready to make the substitution tonight. The Captain who has been designated to pilot our first space ship will stop here on his way to the field. After the news photographs are taken, I'll bring him upstairs. You'll go down in his place."

"And the bomb?"

"There will be a small briefcase beside the door; pick it up as you go out. You will undoubtedly be pleased to know, Major, that you can

accomplish a good deal more than we expected at first. All of our top scientists who had anything to do with the project will be aboard the ship for a pre-flight ceremony which—" The stout man flashed a humorless grin. "—which I promoted myself. The bomb will dispose of them as well as the ship."

"It seems—somewhat unnecessary. It could be considered an act of war."

"**NONSENSE!**" the fat man boomed. "There will be diplomatic protests, I suppose, but the stalemate can't be broken. It is suicide for either of us to begin a war as things stand; we know that as well as you do." He turned back toward the door. "I'll send up something for you to read; it may be as much as an hour before the Captain comes."

When he was alone, the Major dropped uneasily into the chair. His hands were trembling. More than anything else, the stout man's statement of what the Major was to do cast the moral problem in unequivocal terms of black and white. Here was the first ship that could take man into space; here were the men who had turned the dream into reality. It was the Major's dream, too, the thing he had worked all his life to ac-

complish. That the enemy had found the way first meant nothing to the Major. Only if he had believed in the ideologies of the politicians could the Major have believed that there was really an enemy. It was the dream that mattered—the conquest of space—and the Major was expected to destroy it.

Why had the Old Man sent him? Again and again the question pounded at the Major's mind; he could find no answer.

HE WAS plagued, too, with another tenuous fear. Vaguely he had recognized the round, florid face of the stout man. He couldn't associate it, yet, with a name, but he knew it meant trouble. He wracked his brain trying to remember. He had seen that fat face in newspaper photographs; he knew that. But in what connection? He wished he had paid more attention to the yammering of the politicians that filled the daily press, but for years the Major had made a practice of ignoring the news. He had buried himself in the ivory tower of science, and he had hoped to remain there—until the Old Man chose him for this assignment in espionage.

Before he went to the field to murder his dream, the Ma-

Major had to know who the stout man was; he must, for his own safety. There might be an identifying clue somewhere in the house. The Major had been ordered not to leave the bedroom—and obedience was fundamental to his assignment—but he had to learn the truth.

He slipped quietly out of the room, into the empty hall. From the lower floor of the big house he heard a clatter of voices. The fat man apparently was giving a rather large and noisy party.

Two doors from his bedroom the Major found the fat man's study. It was a neat Spartan room. On a leather-topped desk the Major saw a pile of typed speeches, and a number of semi-official publications of the enemy government. He catalogued his host as an enemy politician. Immediately that conclusion seemed important; he almost identified the man, but the flash of insight was lost.

IT TOOK the Major a good part of an hour to investigate three other rooms, but he learned nothing further. Night came and the lights were turned on in the hall. As the Major approached the door of a fourth room, he heard voices and drew back hastily. Two women were

talking in a guarded whisper.

"We'll have to call the paper," one of them said, "and tell them to hold room on the front page tomorrow. He promised to give us an exclusive."

"On the largest spy ring in the country; he really dreams up the big ones."

"When he gives us a story, it's the straight goods. This time they seem to be after our space ship. It beats me where he gets such accurate information."

A sudden wrench of nausea swept the Major's mind. Even before one of the women actually used the fat man's name, the Major remembered where he had seen the news pictures. He knew who his host was.

The Major stumbled numbly back toward his bedroom, trying to make some sort of sense out of the weird shape of the truth. His host, who directed the ring of espionage, was simultaneously the most outspoken enemy of the Major's country. The fat man ran the government investigation which, in a steady blaze of headlines, exposed the agents of espionage. A traitor among traitors; a man whose real loyalty was pledged to nothing.

Security must have known who the fat man was, yet

they played along with him. They let him run their network of spies; they had made no effort to create another which he could not betray when it suited his purposes. Was the same two-faced trickery used with enemy agents who penetrated the secrets of the Major's country? Obviously, yes; it had to be a two-way arrangement. And it could only have been done with the connivance of top politicians in both nations. The net result was that the stalemate of enemy facing enemy—of a world eternally stabilized on the threshold of war—was continued indefinitely. Social equilibrium at the expense of progress.

NATURALLY. That was what the fat man's type of mind wanted; it purchased their kind of security. The Major's mind was torn with bitterness at his own blindness. He had spent his life naively engaged in research which had been doomed from the start. The frightened; flabby men who feared progress had clamped their mental paralysis upon mankind. With a pang of guilt, the Major thought of the enemy space ship, and the scientists who would be aboard it. No wonder he had been sent to destroy the ship and the

minds which had realized the dream. It was fine for man to have his dreams—but he must never attempt to turn them into reality; that would end the stalemate, and dislodge the politicians.

As the Major passed the head of the stairway, he heard a bustle of excited voices in the hall below. A young airforce Captain had just entered the house. He was the original of the photograph the Major had been made up to resemble. The fat man greeted his guest in the dancing glitter of bursting press bulbs. He offered the Captain a drink and then the two men began to move up the carpeted stairs.

The Major retreated into his bedroom. Less than a minute later the door swung open. The young Captain stood on the threshold. The amusement washed out of his face, when he saw the Major, in a flash of incredulity—followed by fear. As the Captain turned toward the fat man the fat man swung a sap viciously against the pilot's skull. He collapsed. The fat man dragged him to the bed.

"All right, you're on your way," he said as he flung the Major the Captain's wallet of identification cards. "Don't forget the briefcase."

THE MAJOR went down the steps. He was fully aware of his own danger, the utter hopelessness of his position. It made no difference whether he personally placed the bomb aboard the ship or not. He was no more than a symbol, a strawman of villainy. If the plan went off according to schedule, he would destroy the ship—and immediately fall into the hands of the enemy police, to star later on in an espionage trial which the fat man would manipulate. Undoubtedly the gray-faced woman, who dreamed of becoming a great artist, and the pick-up man would perform as window-dressing in the same trial. Their usefulness was finished; another espionage ring would be set up before the dreamers found a new way out of the stalemate.

Woodenly, the Major picked up the bomb and climbed into the car waiting on the drive. Two men slid in beside him. They were the same silent, granite-faced chunks of hard muscle who had met him in the farmhouse at dawn.

As the car purred along the city streets toward the field, the Major considered what would follow if he refused to put the bomb aboard the ship. That would be no good; the

men would overpower him and do the job themselves—and still hold him as a symbol of enemy evil.

HAD THE Old Man known that this would happen? Was that why he had sent the Major on this futile mission to the enemy? But such an answer made no sense. There was real affection between the Major and his superior, a real understanding. The Old Man would not have sacrificed the Major to preserve the stalemate; he believed, as the Major did, that the dream of the conquest of space was man's finest hope. The Old Man believed in the dream; therefore, he must have forced the Major to take the assignment because—

Suddenly the Major knew; the weight of guilt fell from his mind. Sure at last of the reason for his mission, the Major was able to think clearly again, for the first time since he had waded ashore on the dark beach.

The car was moving at high speed along the highway toward the field. The Major saw the pattern of blue ground-lights behind the electrified fence. Rising high in the launching scaffold was the ship. A circle of searchlights made a splash of light at its base; men like ants

swarmed on the hard earth beneath the open port.

"The ship was to blast off tonight?" the Major asked.

"All fueled, ready to go," one of the men answered. "Sometime in the next two hours."

The major fingered his briefcase. "Am I to put this in the control cabin?"

"That's up to you—wherever it'll do the job."

"Oh, yes; I'd forgotten. How do I set the timing mechanism?"

The granite-faced man laughed. "It's already set. Major; that baby blows in thirty minutes, and nobody can stop it now."

"Will you two go aboard with me?"

"We'll wait in the car." The man laughed again, enjoying the obscurity of his own humor. "So you can make your getaway, Major."

THE CAR stopped at the gate of the field. A score of men, armed with Tommy guns, lined the road behind the security guard; but the guard made only a cursory inspection of the car, because he was under the impression that he knew the Major.

"Evening, Captain." He grinned as he saluted. "Well, this is the big night, I guess; these two guys with you?"

"Friends."

"Can't go aboard the ship, but we'll pass them through to the field."

The car moved forward again. It stopped just beyond the bright circle of light. The Major got out, carrying the briefcase. The two men walked on either side of him, shouldering a way through the crowd. The Major waited as long as he dared. The one thing he could not do was carry the briefcase aboard the ship. Not only that, but he had to see to it that no one else could do so, either.

Forty paces from the ship he paused and flung the leather case from him, toward the encircling darkness. Simultaneously he ran for the open port. He hoped to make it aboard—but, if not, he was sure that the disturbance he was causing would make it impossible for the men to put the bomb on the ship later.

HE WAS in luck. In the confusion on the field, no one immediately observed that he was running—no one but the two men who were with him. One drew a pistol and fired; the shot went wild but at once the shock of an alert quivered over the field. Far away sirens began to scream. The Major caught the rungs beneath the open port

and swung himself into the airlock. The pistol barked behind him again. Fire stabbed into his left shoulder; his arm went numb.

He darted into the channel that led to the control room. The design of the ship was relatively familiar to the Major, since it was similar to the ship he had helped to build. Startled, frightened faces crowded the narrow space ahead of him. Someone cried, "But it—it isn't the Captain!"

They were still too surprised to act; he pushed through them, swinging his good arm furiously. He heard the booted feet of the security guard echoing in the airlock. The Major smashed his way into the control room and slammed the door, winding the lock into place.

His head swam dizzily as he groped toward the control console. Blood soaked the sleeve of his left arm, and dripped steadily into the swinging palm of his hand. He dropped on the slanted flight chair, running his eyes over the board in front of him. It was the same general pattern of installation that his people had followed. He had counted on that.

He heard a turmoil of voices in the narrow corridor behind the locked door.

There was a dull explosion and a bullet bit into the lock. The Major smiled grimly; he snapped down levers on the panel. Lights glowed red, then green. The airlock port was shut; the gyros began to hum. Automatic warning bells clanged throughout the ship. The Major fired the first fuel chamber. The ship shook in an agony of thunderous sound.

SUDDEN pressure slammed the Major against the cushions of the flight chair. In the moment before he blacked out, he thought of the unexpected cargo man's first space ship would carry into the unexplored void: Scientists, designers, technicians—that host of research men summoned aboard by the fat man to be slaughtered by his bomb. The men who had built the dream; their wives and their children; a handful of security officers trapped in the ship when the port was closed behind them. It was a peculiarly suitable cargo, selected by the random blindness of chance...

From the depths of his black unconsciousness, the Major heard the calm assurance of the Old Man. "*I understand how important the ship is to you, Major. No other man could be trusted*"

to do the job that must be done. You carry tomorrow in your hands, Major; never forget that." At last the Major understood what the Old Man had meant, when they stood talking on the dock above the submarine pens, and knew why he had been selected for this mission to the enemy.

"Mission accomplished sir." He was whispering that hoarsely as the unconsciousness lifted. Through the viewplate, he saw the clean, cold velvet of space, and far away the green globe of the earth. It was over: the statement

was broken. Man had crossed the barrier into the adventure of tomorrow.

The Major got up slowly and moved toward the door. He turned back the lock and swung the door open. It didn't matter now what the others would do, and he had a hunch it wouldn't be much. This was his dream as well as theirs. Solemnly he saluted the invisible presence of the Old Man and repeated. "Mission accomplished."



Information Please!

In recent months, we have received many requests from you, our readers, for long novels in *Science Fiction Stories*. This is understandable, since it is only in the true book-length novel that many science fiction themes can be developed fully, with adequate attention to character portrayal, background detail, and so on. We'd like very much to offer you novels.

In order to do so, however, such stories would have to be run as serials—and two months between installments is much too long a wait, even for readers who are willing to wait for the next issue to continue a story.

We would like you to vote, therefore, on these two questions:

(1) Would you like to see book-length serials in *Science Fiction Stories*?

(2) Would you like to see *Science Fiction Stories* go to a monthly schedule?

Please send a postcard, or a letter, to SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, 241 Church Street, New York, 13, New York, and register your wishes on this matter. Do it today, for we must have a large number of votes before we can make a decision of such importance. —The Editor

INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

Reports and Reminiscences

by ROBERT A. MADLE

BOB OLSEN, PIONEER AUTHOR: It is our sad duty to announce that one of the earliest pioneers of magazine science fiction died this past May, after a short illness. Olsen was the first man to popularize the fourth dimension in a series of stories; the first appeared in the June, 1927 *Amazing*—"The Four Dimensional Roller Press." He also wrote many stories based on entomology, the most prominent of which was "The Ant With A Human Soul," which appeared in *Amazing Stories Quarterly* Spring-Summer, 1932. (This is the "surprise novel" which was scheduled for the ill-fated 3rd issue of *Miracle Stories* mentioned in our department in the May *Science Fiction Stories*. He had close to thirty stories published—most of which appeared between 1927 and 1935, although several appeared as late as 1940.

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

DURING THE late 20's and the early 30's, the magazine field was saturated with so called "air-war" magazines. All of these dealt with the air battles of American aces versus the heinous Germans of World War I. Some of you oldtimers may remember them: *Flying Aces*, *Dare-Devil Aces*, *G-8* and *His Battle Aces*—those were just a few of the many titles. As the mid-thirties arrived, however, World War I had been over for more than fifteen years, and the subject of World War air battles was losing its appeal. Most of the publishers were aware of this, but what could be done about it? A couple of them came up with the idea of modernizing their air-war magazines—dress them up as science fiction magazines.

Consequently, *Battle Birds* became *Dusty Ayres* and *His Battle Birds*, and the subject was future warfare. *War Birds* changed its name to *Terence X*.

O'Leary's War Birds. O'Leary is the boy we're going to spend a few paragraphs on this time. The first issue (completely unheralded) in the new format was dated March, 1935, and featured "a complete \$2.00 novel" — "O'Leary Fights the Golden Ray." Rudolph Belarski's cover showed a gigantic Buck-Rogerish space ship blasting a US Air Force plane out of the sky. The magazine was the usual pulp size, 128 pages, priced at 15¢. (This was typical in the 30's; very few magazines were priced higher than 15¢. It is interesting to observe, however, that even in the depths of the depression the regular s-f magazines were priced at 20¢ and 25¢.)

The O'Leary stories were undulterated adventure stories. The three issues which appeared (March, April, and June, 1935) all dealt with the attempts of Unuk, the High Priest of Lataki (a sunken kingdom) to destroy the United States. The author, Arthur Guy Empey, didn't waste any time in getting the action under way; the first O'Leary novel starts as follows:

"And that Nation in the far north shall be destroyed." A laugh that chilled the blood echoed and reechoed. "The United States of America! Ha! Ha! Ha! resounded the dreadful laugh. "Fire and thunder shall hurtle down from the skies. Mangled bodies! Rivers of blood! The stink of roasting flesh! Toppling building! Cities blasted out of

existence! America shall be destroyed, I say!"

I say, now. Anyone for a set of O'Leary's War Birds? Might mention that some of the real-gone characters which helped round out these three masterpieces of science fiction were Alok, Umgoop, and Satania. The title of the April novel was "O'Leary Dyno-Blaster," and Belarski painted a couple of boys flitting about via their flying belts, zapping ray guns at each other. The final novel, "The Purple Warriors of Neptunia," displayed O'Leary in future diving suit, flitting about under the sea shooting usual ray gun.

Needless to say, O'Leary and his pal McGuffy ultimately vanquish the carnal fiends from the deep sunken kingdom. Anything but classics of science fiction...

NEWs AND VIEWS: Some rather interesting items have been appearing in the newspapers lately. Interesting, that is, in that some of them certainly sound as if they have been plucked from the pages of science fiction magazines. For instance, Dr. Fritz Zwicky, California Institute of Technology rocket expert, has come up with a "world-shaking" method of solving our overpopulation worries. Dr. Zwicky states that the solar system can be revamped by creating a hundred new planets similar in size and clime to *Terra Firma*. This can be accomplished by scooping up huge portions of the larger planets (Jupiter, Saturn and Neptune) and

transferring these portions to smaller planets and their satellites and then changing orbits of these planets and satellites so that they are comparable to that of Earth. Dr. Zwicky said all of this could be done by the use of atomic power. In fact, he further stated, our *segregation* problems could also be settled in this manner. Sorry, Doc. Ray Bradbury thought of *this* idea first.

And Dr. Krafft A. Ehrlicke, former German V-2 rocket propulsion expert who now is with the Convair Corporation, provides a somewhat less radical prediction when he says that human colonies may be established on the moon and nearby planets within 200 years. The first interplanetary pioneers will reside in a large bubble, built of plastic or glass. If anything, the veteran of Hitler's Peenemunde rocket research and development center is overly pessimistic. He did, however, further state that he believed rocket travel *could* be established within our generation, provided a sufficient demand for such flights develops.

A theory gaining national (perhaps worldwide) recognition is the recent one concerning Mars, expounded by Dr. Dean B. McLaughlin of the University of Michigan. (Is this the same Dean McLaughlin — science fiction fan and writer?), Dr. McLaughlin informed the American Astronomical Society that peculiar clouds on the face of Mars could be vast billowings of volcanic dust and steam. If true, this could be added evidence that

Mars is in a volcanic state—a state comparable to that of Earth before life came. Instead of being a dead planet, perhaps Mars is still in its infancy. Science fiction writers—take heed and change your plots in the future.

SHADES of AIR WONDER STORIES! Lt. Col. Robert B. Rigg, writing in ARMOR MAGAZINE, says we will have flying tanks within a generation. Land mines, rivers, bridges, will become obsolete as barriers—as would the military use of roads. Oh well, all of the above only adds weight to the views of the camp who maintain science fiction's predictive abilities are substantial.

George R. Heap (513 Glen Echo Road, Philadelphia, Pa.) is interested in hearing from anyone desiring to join the *Hyborean Legion*. This is an organization whose aim is to preserve and promote the writings of Robert E. Howard, primarily those involving his swash-buckling adventurer, King Conan. Membership is free and a copy of the Legion's bulletin will also be sent anyone requesting same. In addition to Heap, officers of the club are L. Sprague de Camp, Martin Greenberg, Dr. John D. Clark, Oswald Train and Manny Staub.

Harlan Ellison, one-time super-active fan, has sold almost twenty stories during the past year. Following his initial acceptance by INFINITY, Harlan has clicked with regularity. In addition, he's sold more than a half-million words of

crime, mystery, expose, and sex. Harlan, along with Bob Silverberg and Randall Garrett, are turning out a very large percentage of today's science fiction under their own names and various pseudonyms.

Golden Atom Romance: The publication of last year's revival issue of THE GOLDEN ATOM has, more or less directly, resulted in the termination of its editor's short-lived bachelorhood. Larry Farsace who, in addition to being a science fictioneer, is very active in poetry circles, sent a copy to Lilith Lorraine (publisher of the poetry magazine, DIFFERENT). Through Lilith Lorraine (who wrote science fiction in the Gernsback days) he met Duverne Konrick, poetess, librarian, Director of the Louisiana Chapter of Avalon World Arts Academy, and science fiction reader. Larry and Duverne conducted a love affair via correspondence and, following a two months vacation in Las Vegas, were married August 8th. What is probably the strangest coincidence we've heard recently is that Duverne Konrick has had published an atom tale, "The Atom Prince," with the leading character named Ray Cummings. And, informs Larry, she had never heard of Ray Cummings (the author) or of his Golden Atom tales! Congratulations and best of luck to two kindred souls who, according to their interests in life, were literally "made for each other."

MORE ABOUT THE AMATEUR WRITERS' CON-

TEST: In a previous department we mentioned "The First Annual Fandom Fiction Contest," which is being sponsored by the fanzine, SIGMA OCTANTIS. Alfred McCoy Andrews sends further information that many supplementary prizes have been added—such as "The Talbot Mundy Bibliography," "Pilgrims Through Space & Time," "Checklist of Fantastic Magazines," et cetera. There are all sorts of prizes available for the winners. And all you have to do is enter your stories. The winning stories will be published in SIGMA OCTANTIS, and all entries will receive criticism and comment. Ten awards will be made, and the closing date is 12/31/56. Anyone who has not had a story published *professionally* is eligible. Keep your stories under 5000 words and send them to John Mussells, 4 Curve Street, Wakefield, Massachusetts.

THE FAN PRESS

TWO ISSUES of "JD" have appeared at the same time. It seems that editor Lynn Hickman (710 Boulevard NE, Orangeburg, South Carolina) has been so busy moving from Michigan to S.C. that issue No. 23 took six months to produce. This issue features all departments by Basil Wells, Dick Ellington, Wilkie Conner, Bob Madle, and Bob Hoskins. As could be expected with such a delayed issue, most of the material covered by the aforementioned gentlemen is somewhat out of date. However,

issue No. 24 is something different again. This is what Lynn (a Yankee turned rebel—a professional Southerner, in fact) calls his "bombshell issue." With the exception of Madle's department, "Stars and Bars" (s-f news from the South), and a few fanzine reviews, this number is devoted to a *very* controversial subject—particularly in the South—segregation. If you're looking for meaty controversy, send 20c for a sample copy. Whether one agrees with Lynn's views or not, the fact that he publishes one of the most interesting fanzines cannot be denied.

QUELLES HORREURS! (10c for a sample from Rusty and Dave Jenrette, 1939 SW 14th Terrace, Miami, Florida). Here's the initial issue of a very clever husband and wife team. This pair of fans-turned-domestic have put together 18 pages of humor, whimsy, and home-grown philosophy. Everything is husband-and-wife written, and opens up with a report on 1956's Westercon. In summing up this article it can be said that our hero and heroine were not too

impressed. This is followed by an expose type of article called, "The Real John Carter." Dave Jenrette, who previously exposed Tarzan, casts some doubt and many aspersions upon the character of "The best swordsman in all Barroom." Admirers of John Carter should peruse this with an open mind, even though it will probably tarnish their idol.

Rusty tells of an insidious plan to spread the gospel of black magic throughout the USA. And she quotes from an advertisement in *HOUSE BEAUTIFUL* to prove her point! About the doll (part of a black magic kit, as advertised) she queries, "If the doll wasn't made for evil, why was it made? What else is going on in the sane old USA?" There is also an interesting article on the science fiction bust—with comments requested for publication in subsequent issues.

Have to cut the reviews short this time. Promise to do better next issue, so keep sending them to Robert A. Madle, 1620 Anderson Street, Charlotte, N.C.



*Marriage should be based on trust, but Lieutenant Mari-
tane's only hope lay in deceiving his wife for their first
four years ...*

OCCUPATIONAL RISK

by JOHN CHRISTOPHER

(author of "Decoy")

illustrated by ORBAN

HE RAN into Ben Stilldon about fifteen hundred. He was on the sidewalk, on the fifteen lane, and Ben was moving onto the five lane from a department store. He called to him, and they met on the ten.

Ben said: "God Awmighty, Steve! How long is it—three years?"

"About that." College friendships can stand up to so much, but not to the variable leaves afforded by service in the Navy and in the Space Corps. There had been a couple of vocograms either way at the beginning, but there never seemed to be any

prospect of a reunion. "How long have you got?"

"Ten day furlough," Ben said. "This is my third day. How about you?"

"We blast in forty eight hours."

They looked at each other and grinned. He pummelled Ben's arm. Ben said: "We'll have to do something about this."

"I'm free this evening."

"That's great! Say, though, I promised I'd look in on a party this afternoon. Come along with me, and we'll get warmed up."

"I can't just push in."

"Hell, yes! It's an open house, everybody welcome."



THEY MOVED right over to the twenty five lane, and took the cross-over out towards the south limits. It was a big steel house, set back with its own five running up to the main entrance. Ben introduced him to the hostess, a friendly, silly-looking woman, about forty five or fifty. The cocktail room was at the back, with a view over lawn and plastic abbey ruins. Mrs. Dormer waved them in.

"Here's Ben at last", she announced. "And he's brought a Navy friend of his, Steve Maritane."

He wondered whether he

should correct the Navy reference, but decided it wasn't worth bothering. Two or three of the men were in Navy uniform; Ben wouldn't, but they might take it as another illustration of the SC's reputed cockiness. In any case, he dismissed the whole thing as trivial a minute later.

Mrs. Dormer said: "This is June. June—Steve Maritane. You know Ben. Will you look after these two boys?"

She wore the loose full-skirted dress that was currently fashionable; it was the first time he had seen it look

good. She had soft blonde hair, and a complexion that looked as though a breath would mar it. June, he thought. That name fits all right. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

She said in a cool soft voice: "Are you an old friend of Ben's?"

Ben laughed; "One of the oldest; we roomed together right through college."

"And after?" She looked up at Steve with appraising eyes. Friendly eyes.

"Our furloughs never coincided; we lost touch. You know how it is. I just bumped into him again a while back, outside the Zono."

Ben tapped the parcel under his arm. "That reminds me. I've got to unload this. You look after June; I'll be right back."

"Don't hurry," he called.

She smiled. "And after just meeting one of your oldest friends!"

He said: "There are priorities. I've got less than two days. Do you think you might show me the garden?"

She looked at him. "I don't usually. But it's the gardener's day off...and if you only have two days..."

THE GARDEN was the landscaper's standard product. They sat on the imita-

tion lichen stone, listening to the artificial bird song.

She said. "I suppose your family are used to it—being home only for a short time and then away again."

"People get used to things."

She nodded. "I know. To most things."

He looked at her directly. "Do you think you could? Get used to that kind of thing?"

She flushed slightly; the words 'in a husband', although unspoken, were so obvious. Around them the record of the thrush's song ended, and a carol of larks began.

"Perhaps. Yes. There's only one thing I know I could not get used to."

"And that?"

She looked away from him, towards the invisible larks. "The Space Corps."

The blow hit him so hard that at first he thought she knew that he was SC himself. His instinct was to challenge her on this, but he controlled himself in time. He said softly: "What have you got against the SC?"

She shook her head. "Nothing. Mrs. Dormer is only my aunt. My father was Walter Avery."

HE DID NOT say anything straight away; he remembered the story of

Walter Avery. Avery had been outside checking on a hull fault when a meteor welded the outer door of the airlock. For nineteen days, the rest of the crew had had to see his starving and at last suffocating features pressed against the fused quartz windows. One of the crew had gone mad; another had written a book about it. A best seller.

He said at last: "Terrible things happen at sea, you know. I'm sorry, June."

"It's not logical. But the idea of space just catches my mind and twists it. I was only eleven. I wasn't supposed to know the details, but I got hold of one of the newspapers—one of the more sensational ones."

He could imagine what that must have been like, to a girl of eleven. Any idea of revealing his own membership of the Corps went. He was confused. He did not know where he was going, or what he wanted. But he knew he had to tread warily. "You don't want to brood over things."

"No." She smiled. "When did you say you sail?"

"Afternoon, the day after tomorrow."

"To where?"

He hesitated. "We don't know until we get there."

She said dreamily. "How unfair. But romantic, too, in a way."

Romantic, he thought...

THEY WALKED back to the house together, hand in hand, and he had a date for the evening. He made sure of seeing Ben before she did.

"You always used to move fast, by God," Ben said, "but I guess you've got faster."

"One thing; just one thing. From now on, I'm the Navy. O.K.? Not SC—Navy."

Ben looked at him shrewdly. "You mean—because June's father was...? Hell, Steve. Is that a good play? She's got to know some time."

"Let me worry about bridges when I come to them. You'll back me?"

"Don't think it isn't crazy," Ben said, "but I'll back you."

JUNE SENT her vocograms to a Navy accommodation address that Ben fixed up for him. The ones he sent back to her were progressively more affectionate in tone. His next furlough he spent entirely at the Dormers'. He excused himself on the third morning, and took the twenty five in to the city centre.

SC Welfare had the top half of the Copernicus Build-

ing at the corner of 17th and 22nd. The dozens of page boys were dressed in miniature SC uniforms; it was traditional that they went on into the Corps on reaching seventeen, but nowadays more of them went in for bartending, and similar professions. Steve thought about that as the transparent bubble whisked him up through the building. The gilt was certainly off the gingerbread. The Corps had had its days of glory, things were routine now.

He drew a Commander Florence Carryl: room 318. She was about fifty; well-preserved, efficient, firmly sympathetic, sympathetically firm. All that was evident while she shook hands and motioned him to a chair. You had to hand it to SC for the right person in the right place.

"Lieutenant Maritane," she said. She had his file open in front of her. "What's the trouble?"

"I want to get married", he told her.

Commander Carryl smiled. "We don't forbid that. We don't encourage it, but we don't forbid it either. Put in a routine notification."

HE TOOK the pipe of tobacco she offered him,

and bent forward to light it as the desk lighter filament slid across to him.

"There's one difficulty. The girl I want to marry... she can't stand the idea of space travel."

The Commander nodded. "Send her along; we'll put it across to her."

He shook his head. "No hope."

"We've done it before. It often happens."

"Not like this." He paused. "She's Avery's daughter."

The Commander looked at him slowly. "You have a problem, Lieutenant. It admits of two solutions: Give up the girl, or give up the Corps."

"Yes", he said; "that's how I read it."

"And...?"

"If she'll take me, I'm going to marry her."

She looked down at his file. The top sheet was his graduation slip. He knew how good it was; he had only missed Distinction in one subject out of the ten.

"Why do you come to me?"

"For advice." He looked at her levelly, without wincing. "I've got a good record. I thought I might stand a chance of an Earth-based job; as a special concession."

"I'm sorry. You've done"—she riffled through the papers in the file—"three years

up top. Apart from medical re-grading, no application for Earth posting can be considered with less than seven years' space service. I take it you won't put the wedding off for four years?"

"You take it. I knew about the seven years minimum, of course, but I thought it was worth asking all the same.

I've got my resignation from the Corps written out already." He reached for his pocketbook. "It's here."

COMMANDER CARRYL did not take the paper he pushed towards her. She looked down again at the file. "Have you any idea, Lieutenant, how difficult it is to find a job if you do resign from SC?"

"No. I know I'm reasonably able; I could do most jobs."

"The difficulty is that you wouldn't get the chance of doing most jobs; of doing any worthwhile job, in fact. There's a lot of money invested in you: I think you would be surprised if I told you just what your training cost. Should that money be wilfully thrown away... Let me say only that the Corps is well respected; your resignation would not be a recommendation for any other job."

"You would have me black-listed?"

"I could refuse to accept that interpretation, but in your case I think we must be honest. The Corps would have you blacklisted; you would not get any responsible job anywhere on the planet."

STEVE LOOKED at her. Firmly sympathetic. And it wasn't all that unfair. He saw it from their point of view: a good officer throwing his career away on a woman. It justified strong measures. He thought of June.

"If she sees it my way, it's still worth it. I think she will. If so, I'll let you have my resignation in the morning." He stood up. "Thanks for the advice, and for the information."

"Just a minute," the Commander said. "Sit down again. Right now, Miss Avery doesn't know you are SC?"

"No."

"What does she think you do?"

"Navy. I was introduced that way, by accident. I found out who she was, and what she thought of SC almost immediately; so I kept the pretence up. I'll be glad to drop it."

Commander Carryl said

softly: "Our job is to help you. Helping you helps the Corps as well, of course. There may be a way round this. Stick with us for another four years, and I can guarantee an application for transfer to Earth-base will go through. Meanwhile, we'll co-operate in your minor—deception. Once you hit the planet, you will be Navy. Your papers will be adjusted; everything will be fixed. You can even report back to a Navy base; we'll take care of all the details." She looked at him. "How does it strike you?"

"That you are asking me to marry a girl with the intention of lying to her consistently for the first four years of our married life."

"Yes. Precisely that. Consider this, though—Miss Avery's attitude towards the Corps is founded on an irrational emotion; she would admit as much herself. In that respect, she is a sick person. We can never be quite honest with the sick. Can you even be sure she would not develop a violent dislike for you in knowing that you had been in the Corps, even though you were resigning from it for her sake?"

IT HAD NOT crossed his mind before, but he saw that what the Commander

had suggested was all too possible. She leaned forward, pressing her point home.

"And that, combined with the financial poverty you would almost certainly have to endure...I should think very carefully, Lieutenant, before refusing this offer."

"Yes." There were several seconds of silence while he thought about things. Four years. But how many years of kicking around from one job to another, each one a step towards the gutter? Years of watching the night rockets draw their dazzling trails across the sky. He could not even be sure that he would not, in the end, come to resent the woman who had taken all these things from him. Against that, four years. An honest life at the end of four years, and June in the meanwhile.

"O.K." he said. "I'll take it; but don't let me down."

"The Corps never does," Commander Carryl said. She made an entry in his file. "Congratulations, by the way. You are due for Senior Lieutenant from the end of this month."

He smiled wryly. "And I was all set to be a civilian."

"You will be detached from the *Hesperides*, you will get an assignment to the

Lucas, dating from your promotion."

"The Lucas? I don't know her."

"Newly commissioned; she's a research boat. All the latest trimmings. You'll like her."

Steve looked at the wall calendar. "End of the month..."

"Yes," Commander Carryl said. "A three-week honeymoon, if you don't waste any time."

He got up to go. "Thanks a lot. I don't know if I'm doing the right thing, but thanks all the same."

"One small detail. I don't need to remind you of it, but it's the routine. While you are space-based, no children."

"Yes," he said. "I know. Thank you, Commander."

FOR THE honeymoon they chartered one of the floating islands in the south Pacific. There was a double lagoon, best quality white sands, and a gently-wooded hill interior with three freshwater springs. It was about a quarter of a mile across. This was the typhoon season but they had no occasion to use the built-in storm shelter. The hot lazy days drifted by, interspersed with warm velvet nights. On one of these they sat together, by the side of the inner lagoon, under a

moon that might have come with the other fittings.

"Been good?" June asked him.

"Been perfect. I'm glad I married a girl with a rich aunt; on my pay it would have been Florida at best. This is wonderful."

"Dear Sue. She's always been fantastically generous to me. Daddy was her only brother; she took me when he—died."

He said nothing, tightening his arm about her.

"Funny", she went on. "I haven't thought about that once since we've been here. Before, not a single day could go past without my thinking about it."

"We have to forget; he wouldn't have wanted you to go on remembering."

He felt her head nod against his shoulder. "No. I know. I wouldn't want children of mine to have the torture of that memory." When he said nothing, she said. "How many shall we have, Steve? Children."

"Not at once; in a few years' time, when things are more settled."

There was surprise in her voice. "I didn't say when, I said how many."

Recovering himself, he laughed a little too quickly.

"Any amount. A round dozen. That suit you?"

SHE LAUGHED herself, and then they were quiet. A breeze came in from the ocean, feathering the lagoon into little rippling waves, cool and a little damp against their warm skins.

"How much longer?" she asked.

"I've forgotten to count."

"We might just stay on here forever."

"They will be sending the gyro for us. Alas."

The moon's path was broad across the water.

"I like the sea," she said.

"So do I."

Surprise again. "Well, as a Navy man..."

He covered up. "We don't all like it; some guys only sign on for the uniform."

She laughed again. On a honeymoon, he thought, one laughs easily: slips can be made good. But he would have to improve, during the next four years.

HE REALIZED later that there had been, at the back of his mind, the thought that June's antipathy to the Corps might soften, and that somehow it might be possible to explain things to her, even to explain the deceit that he was now forced to practise.

He gave up hope of this when they were saying good-bye at the end of his third furlough after their marriage.

He had said: "It won't be long; less than two months on this trip."

She wrinkled her face. "Too long."

He kissed her. "Much too long."

"It could be worse. Mary Atherton, for instance. John Atherton is SC; I get the shivers as badly as she does whenever he goes back."

He looked at her. "I shouldn't think she gets the shivers. No reason. We have almost as many casualties in the Navy as they do now in SC; and they are much heavier in Airjets."

"I know, but I get the shivers all the same. I'd rather you were six months away in the Navy than six days in space. But don't let's talk about it."

He was feeling the strain. "No; not now anyway."

She looked away from him, towards the pattern-wall. It was going through reds at the moment; the colours beat in towards the centre, pink glowing into red glow-into crimson, in successive waves.

"Darling," she said. "There is something we should talk about." His gaze was inquir-

ing. "I don't know for sure yet, of course, but I think..."

He felt the shiver start in the small of his back and run down his legs.

"It can't be! Not possibly."

She smiled. "Steve! Don't look so glum. We had to start some time."

"But not yet; we said not yet."

She shrugged delicately. "Anyway, there's nothing to be done about it." She put her hand against his face. "You will just have to get used to the idea."

There was only one thing to be done. He thought of telling her that, of telling her why this child could not be allowed to be born. She was looking at him, half anxiously. He couldn't do it; not at once. Perhaps later...

He took her in his arms and felt her nestle against him, and knew that there would never be a later in which he could break her trust. "Everything's going to be fine, honey; just fine."

She tightened her grip on his arm. "How could it possibly be any other way?"

HE TOOK his load of trouble back to the *Lucas*. He had some idea of talking things over with one of his fellow officers. But when he was in the mess-

room, thinking about this, he realized something that had not occurred to him before: all the senior officers on the *Lucas* were married men. With marriage discouraged as it was in the Corps, that was unusual. And it effectually prevented him going to anyone else with his problem; the thing was too close to each and every one of them for that.

He could, of course, have gone back to Welfare. You were encouraged to take everything to Welfare: nothing too trivial, nothing too grave, was their slogan. But he knew very well there was only one thing Commander Carryl could tell him. It was certain, too, that, should she suspect him of being unwilling to tell June himself, she would arrange to have things attended to for him. And that meant losing June. He listened, his mind dazed, to the speaker purring out the preliminaries to blasting. He was going to June anyway; there was no way out.

The *Lucas* did not normally make planet-falls; her courses took her in varying orbits between Venus and the Asteroids, charting meteor concentrations and the courses and characteristics of the still little-understood magnetic storms. On this trip,

though, she was carrying some supplies for the observatory at Copernicus. They stayed over ten hours at Luna City. He remembered that his old genetics professor, von Rommlich, had retired there some time previously, with obesity and a jerky heart. He looked him up in the directory, and took a twenty five along to his apartment.

IT WAS RIGHT on the ledge of the bubble, up against the green belt of trees that were so important a factor in the ecology of the lunar bases. Von Rommlich made him welcome. His effusiveness was out of all proportion to the pleasure a retired professor might be expected to get out of seeing again a not too brilliant student out of a class of five years before. (It was Biology, an extra subject, that had failed to get a Distinction in). Steve shook hands understandingly; life was lonely in Luna City.

Von Rommlich said: "And how are things back home?"

"Just as you see them on the screens, sir."

The old man nodded. "It's funny. In a way I'd rather things were completely cut off, that it wasn't possible to see and hear things I shall

never be able to touch again. You understand, Lieutenant?"

"I think so." He hesitated. "There's something I want your help on."

"Anything. One gets out of the habit of being needed; that's another bad thing."

"I want to run over things in my mind first. Tell me if I go wrong anywhere. Cosmic rays—on earth they have no perceptible effect on living organisms, owing to the blanketing effect of the atmosphere. In space they are not filtered. They have a powerful effect on the germ plasm. Those who have been exposed to them are likely to father...monsters."

Von Rommlich nodded his head. "'Likely' will do. I should say 'certain'. Genetically it is as near to an impossibility as anything could be that someone who has been so exposed should father a normal child." He smiled. "That is why your superiors do not encourage you to marry while on space service and why, in the event of your doing so, they provide you with those little green anti-fertility pills. It is all for your own good."

Steve said: "I'm married, sir; and my wife thinks she is going to have a child."

VON ROMMLICH looked at him acutely. "That's a very serious matter, Steve."

"Serious. My God! I thought...I wondered if there was any possibility of the theory being wrong."

"There would be no point in lying to you. No."

"Their little pills haven't worked, have they? The theory might be mistaken, too."

Von Rommlich looked out towards the curtain of green. "The theoretician always has an advantage over the practitioner. He deals with ideal conditions. Men are always making mistakes; nature never does. The fact that the anti-fertility pills have failed to work in your case—that's surprising. But for your child to be normal—that would verge on the miraculous. I'm sorry to have to say this, Steve, but the child will have to be got rid of. There's your wife's health to consider."

THERE WAS a squirrel on a branch that came down low to the window. A handful of them had been imported twenty years ago out of sentiment. Sentiment had long given way to the more vital needs of conserving the trees against their depredations. This was a chance survivor, with the hand of eve-

ry man on the mood against it. As Steve watched, it jumped, clearing several branches, a miniature flying fox with the aid of lunar gravity.

Steve said: "She's going to suffer anyway."

"For a time," Von Rommlich agreed; "but you will have children, later."

Steve brought it out. "She doesn't know I'm SC."

"I don't understand that. Why? In heaven's name, why?"

He listened, as Steve told him the story.

"You have been a very foolish young man," he said at last. "You have allowed your wife to be put in a position where, whatever you do, she must be hurt—badly hurt. That is your responsibility."

"I know that. But what do I do now?"

Von Rommlich said: "Rule yourself out, to start with. Your greatest fear has been of losing your wife. That is a selfish feeling. Your aim must now be to save her as much suffering as is possible. There is only one thing you can do: tell her everything."

"Hard advice, sir." He looked at the fat ageing professor, tied to his exile that could have only one release. "I'll take it."

THE LUCAS dropped back to Pittsburgh a day early. They stopped congratulating themselves when the Captain's Conference call sounded in the speakers and, crowding into the forward lounge, they saw Captain Melville's face. He had a special expression, reserved for occasions of refusing or cancelling privileges, which was widely known. He spoke in the tired-sounding drawl that went with the expression.

"No leave, gentlemen," he said; "Not this trip. I'm sorry, but as you know—you engage in this Corps for service twenty four hours a day, three hundred and sixty five days a year, when needed. The extra day in leap years is yours by right." They didn't smile, and he went on: "There is an emergency; a minor one, but enough to require this boat. We have lost three boats—the *Arkham*, the *Swinburne* and the *Gothic*—in what seems to have been the granddaddy of all magnetic storms in Uranun orbit. We go in to replace, and we go in now."

Looker, the first mate, said: "No chance of a 24-hour, even? We have some locals."

"We blast—". Captain Melville looked at his watch.

"—in forty five minutes. Any questions?"

Kearns, the radioman, said: "Why us? What about some of the nearer boats?"

THE DRAWL was almost a yawn. "Even if the Corps encouraged that type of question, Mr. Kearns, it would not be a good one. As a matter of fact, we have had our good fortune, all of us. The *Lucas* is, as you know, J-type—there isn't as large a boat working anywhere within the Asteroids. Don't ask me why we've been lucky so far, because I can't tell you. All right, gentlemen; back to stations."

Steve caught him on the way out. "I don't like asking for privileges, sir..."

Captain Melville stared at him. "That's O.K., Lieutenant; I don't like refusing them."

"It's very urgent."

"If your aged father was being executed tomorrow for sheep-stealing, Lieutenant, I could not release you now even to ascertain his last wishes. This boat has not dropped and, officially speaking, is not going to blast. We are still on space duty. In fact, we are still in space. The sight of Pittsburgh through the forward observation window is an hal-

lucination: a vision of Paradise, one might say, if one did not know Pittsburgh. We are being diverted on course, and the next thing we shall see will be either Mars or Ceres, depending on instructions. All clear?"

"Yes, sir. How long..."

"The remainder of our tour of duty? Until we are relieved. A year perhaps. Or maybe a month. I hope, a month."

IT WAS SEVEN gruelling months before the *Lucas* dropped again to Pittsburgh. Steve got his clearance and check-out in record time, and within an hour was in a gyro heading for home. He dropped onto the lawn and headed for the front door. The house had an empty look. As he tripped the front door; he heard the gently modulated tones of the robot butler:

"Please transfer all inquiries for Mrs. Maritane to the Holy Cross Hospital at Baltimore. Please transfer..."

He made it in forty three minutes. The girl at the desk said: "Maritane. Oh yes, Ward 7. I think..." He had already left her and was racing in the direction the arrow said was that of Ward 7. She called after him:

"Lieutenant, come back! There are special instructions in your case. First you have to see..."

He could imagine the special instructions. But whatever horror awaited him, the important thing was to get to June. He went through the open doors of Ward 7, but slowed at the sight of the babies. The nursery was at the top of the ward, divided from the main section by a partition. There were over a dozen babies, each in its little transparent box. He thought, with a dull pain; normal children.

He tried to avoid looking at them, but from the corner of his eye he caught the label on one, half way down on the right. Maritane. Automatically he turned to look.

The child was crying. Its face was wrinkled up in a fury of anger at a strange and unattractive world. And it was normal. There was no doubt about it being normal. He bent to read the particulars on the card:

Boy Maritane. 3.8 kilos. Yesterday's date.

A nurse asked: "Were you looking for your wife?"

"Yes, Mrs. Maritane."

"This way."

HE FOLLOWED her, beginning to understand.

The first thought had been that von Rommlich was wrong—it brought a surge of relief. But he could not hold that idea: von Rommlich had been too positive, and his positiveness had in itself been only a part of everything else—the Corps' discouragement of marriage, the anti-fertility pills, the textbooks about the early explorers of space. No, there was an alternative possibility, as he saw now, for the first time but with unpleasant clarity. Throughout their marriage he had been deceiving June. And June...

"In here," the nurse said.

He summoned his will power to smile as he entered the little room. June was sitting up against the pillows. She looked weak, but very lovely. She gasped as she saw him: the small exhalation of astonishment that in the past had always had power to captivate him. He bent quickly to kiss her, so that he should not have to look in her eyes.

"It's so wonderful," she whispered. "The Navy told me you'd been sent on this special Antarctic service. They couldn't say when you would get back. It's been so long."

'Special Antarctic service', he thought. Commander Carryl on the job again.

"It's been too long," he said.

"Did you see...?"

"The baby? As I came in. He's a fine kid. What are we going to call him, honey?"

HE PUT the question like a trap, and was amazed at his own maliciousness as he did so. Would she suggest a name that gave a clue. Ben, Andre? Joe Burke?

"Steve, darling; what else?"

But the answer only showed the depth of her cunning. A part of his mind protested that this was nonsense, but reason would not long be gain-said. Only her weakness stopped him from accusing her. He was glad when he was able to take his leave.

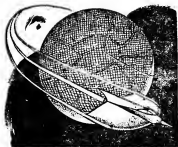
Going back through the ward, he passed the child with his eyes averted.

THE GIRL at the desk was waiting for him. "This way, Lieutenant. Someone to see you."

In an ante-room, Commander Carryl was sitting, as straight-backed and well-groomed as ever.

"Ah," he said bitterly. "I might have expected you."

She said: "I wanted to see you before you went up; I knew the Lucas was dropping, of course. I've been here since ten hundred."



"Welfare thinks of everything. Thank you, Commander. I got a shock, though it wasn't the one I expected. But you would cover for all eventualities, of course."

"I have some explaining to do."

"Explaining? I should concentrate on the more useful side; arranging my divorce for me."

"If you had come to me as soon as you knew..."

"My one error," he said, "has been a lack of frankness to SC Welfare."

"Don't be bitter, Lieutenant. Get one thing into your head: that is your child, in Ward 7."

"What did you do—amputate the tentacles?"

"The *Lucas* is a special ship. The problem was shielding. It was tricky, very tricky, but with the *Lucas* we licked it. The cosmic ray impingement inside the *Lucas* is lower than it is here." She smiled. "You may

have noticed that most of your colleagues were married men. When your particular problem cropped up, I had you fitted in. We couldn't let you in on this, because of course, the whole thing was experimental. Your son is the first token of success."

He saw all right. He began to get angry.

"And seven months of agony fit in to the little experiment, too?"

"No," she said. "We're sorry about that. It was an emergency, and they carted the *Lucas* off. Welfare protested, if that's any consolation, but Operations had the last word, as they always do. We're sorry."

"Sorry!"

"Yes, I know; but we'll put it tangibly. You are detached, Lieutenant, to earth-based duties. Starting immediately after your present leave."

He looked at her. "Commander, I see at last that you are human. Will you excuse me? I want to go back to my wife."

"Of course."

He paused at the door. "So human that I had an impulse to kiss you. Only respect for rank prevented me."

"It always does," she said regretfully.

READIN' AND WRITHIN'

(continued from page 82)

expedition to a new world, too. Remember the Indians?

I don't mean that any aliens would necessarily be the Columbus type; they might really be nice people. But Mr. Gaul makes it seem as though it had already been scientifically decided.

When he comes to flying saucers, he makes several statements which are utterly false. In reference to saucers, he says, on Page 129:

There is no doubt about their existence.

Again, he has transformed what is apparently a personal opinion into a "fact."

To continue to quote from the book and show where the author has stepped on his own toes, and on the toes of the reader, would require more space than this magazine could conveniently spare. What, then, is wrong with the book *as a whole*?

A non-fiction book is presumably written for the purpose of educating the public, just as fiction is written to entertain. There are other reasons, of course—money, for instance—but it is ethically wrong to take money under false pretences.

If fiction does not entertain, it rarely sees print; but non-fiction is something else again.

Most publishers know whether a book is entertaining or not; apparently many of them do not know—or do not care—whether it is factual or not.

Mr. Gaul displays only a superficial knowledge of space flight and the problems involved therein. It would seem that most of his knowledge come from popularizations of astronomy—in other words, it is second hand. If this is true, then, in my opinion, he had no right, ethically speaking, to write such a book as this purports to be. On the other hand, if he has actually studied the source material, it only proves that Mr. Gaul, as an etymologist, is about as well qualified for writing a book of this type as a worker ant is to lay eggs.

Through it all, however, Mr. Gaul seems to have a purpose. Although it pretends to be a book telling all about space travel, it actually seems to be no more than pro-saucer propaganda in the end. It reads somewhat as though George Adamski had fumblingly rewritten Willy Ley's "Travel" and "Conquest of Space."

If you feel that you *must* buy the book for the Finlay illustrations or the Moskowitz portfolio of old S-F illustrations at the end; if you feel that you can afford the

exorbitant price, then I suggest you do this: Cut the illustrations neatly from the binding and send the rest back to the publishers.

Maybe they'll take the hint and just put out a Finlay portfolio.

200 MILES UP—The Conquest of the Upper Air, by J. Gordon Vaeth, The Ronald Press Company, \$5.00. 261 pp., 77 illustrations.

This is the second—and revised—edition of a book first published in 1951. As you might assume from the title, it is concerned with the scientific investigation of the upper reaches of Earth's atmosphere; thus, the additional research which has been done in the ensuing five years is enough to make changes in the book necessary. During that time, the "sky-hook" balloon reached a record height of 116,700 feet; the X-1A rocket plane lifted Major Arthur Murray to 85,000 feet; the Viking rocket set a 158-mile record for single-stage rockets, and the President of the United States announced the intended launching of the first artificial satellite.

(It is my personal opinion that there will not be another revision. The next book will probably be called *500 Miles Up* or perhaps *All the Way Up*.)

The author, J. Gordon Vaeth, is the head of the New Weapon and Systems Division of the U. S. Navy Special Devices Center,

which operates under the Office of Navy Research. He is, therefore, a man who is qualified to speak authoritatively on the subject.

In a way, this book is similar to Albro T. Gaul's "Complete Book of Space Travel"—in about the same way that a normal, intelligent human being is similar to the distorted parody of humanity created by Dr. Frankenstein.

Like Gaul, Vaeth tries to tell the public what is known about rockets and space travel today. Like Gaul, he speculates about the future, and even wonders about flying saucers.

And there, brethren, the similarity ends.

Vaeth begins very naturally by describing the atmosphere itself—how it acts, what it's made of, and how we know all these facts. The next step is to describe in fair detail the instruments and vehicles which scientists are now using to probe the tenuous atmosphere high above our heads.

There is valuable data here; there is much which "gives one to think." We are told what is known, what is surmised, and what is not known—and Vaeth tells it with clarity, conciseness, and precision.

His mention of "flying saucers" is told calmly, and apparently without distortion of the facts as he knows them. He builds up to it by describing what a "skyhook" balloon looks like at high altitude. At 95,000 feet, higher than

any airplane has ever gone, a skyhook 72 feet in diameter is easily visible. If a pilot tried to climb up after one, he'd have little success; at 20,000 feet, it wouldn't look much closer than it did from the ground.

And, further:

Many persons conceive of a balloon as a slowly drifting affair, and will refuse to believe that a large, strange-looking, ice-cream cone shaped, airborne object moving at 195 miles per hour can be a balloon.

But a skyhook caught in the "jet stream" can *really* travel!

Then he proceeds to tell about the sighting of an unidentified flying object. It was observed on 24 April 1949 at 10:30 A.M. from a balloon-launching site 3 miles north of Arrey, New Mexico. It was observed by a group of Naval men—a trained observing team under the command of Charles B. Moore, Jr., "an aerologist, graduate engineer, and balloonist."

It was checked by trained men using instruments especially designed to follow and check the actions of airborne objects. Readings and measurements were taken and are quoted in the book. It was established that the object was not a balloon at any altitude less than 90,000 feet. It has never been identified.

There are some "factual" authors, who, given such data as this, would immediately leap off

into the wild black yonder.

Vaeth says:

The author, and indeed Moore himself, make no claim that the unidentified object was a 'flying saucer'. The details have been set forth and should be evaluated by each reader for himself.

Space travel is approached with equal candor, coolness, and restraint. He states facts, makes guesses, asks questions, and gives opinions—and each of them is labelled as such. He does not try to sound as though we were going to get space travel by next Michaelmas, but he is of the firm opinion that we will have it eventually.

This is the sort of reportorial and analytical work that a "popularization" of science should display. It is not written as source material for Ph. D.'s, and it is not written for the amusement of children or middle-grade morons. But the scientist could read and enjoy it, and learn from it. And a boob could gather something from it if he were willing to pick it up in the first place.

It is not "written down" to anyone, yet it is easily understood and pleasant to read. The great majority of its illustrations are full-page photographs of various rockets, balloons, and instruments in action, along with maps and cutaway drawings of detail work.

If it lacks anything which other



good popularizations have had, it lacks humor. Men like Dr. George Gamow, Willy Ley, L. Sprague de Camp, and even Sir James Jeans, seem to have the pleasant habit of inserting a choice, but pertinent, quip now and then. However—pleasant though that habit may be—it is not in search of humor that we read books on science. If we want laughs, we go elsewhere; from a scientific book, we want facts and explanations.

Vaeth gives us both and makes them easy to assimilate. His book is well worth the price.

BETWEEN THE PLANETS by Fletcher G. Watson; Harvard

University Press, 188pp., 67 photographic plates, \$5.00.

Most books on astronomy seem to follow a set pattern, a sort of guided tour or travelogue of the Solar System, hopping from planet to planet, never dwelling very long on any one of them. Still others—like those of Percival Lowell, whose passion was Mars—will pick one planet and describe it and speculate on it from every angle. (Mars, by the by, is about the only planet worth a whole book; not enough is known about the others to fill a book.)

It is refreshing, therefore, to find a book which deals with an area of astronomy which contains a wealth of material overlooked by the average treatises on the subject.

Those "vermin of the skies," the asteroids, and their cousins, the meteorites and the comets, are the subject at hand. Whereas most books devote the majority of their space to a survey of the Solar System—and perhaps a small chapter on the debris between the planets—Professor Watson inverts the structure; he gives one chapter over to the survey in order to orient the reader, and then fills the rest of the book with fascinating data on the erratically-behaving smaller bodies of the System.

Watson's style is clear and readable, although at times, he begins to sound as though he were de-

livering a lecture—which is not at all surprising.

In the main body of the text, as well as in the numerous tables and diagrams, Watson uses the metric system, which may make for a little confusion for those who are accustomed to thinking in miles and pounds instead of kilometers and grams. However, he offsets this greatly by explaining in Chapter One why the system is used; and he compares it with the English system, so that the reader can make his own conversions if necessary.

To me, one of the most interesting parts was Chapter 3, "Whirling Fragments." It is well known that all the planets, with the exception of Mercury, rotate on their axes several times during a single revolution about the sun—Earth, for instance, spins around a fraction more than 365 times. Well, then, how about the planetoids? (I personally prefer "planetoids" to "asteroids." The first means "planet-like," which they are; the second means "star-like," which they definitely are not. But either term is acceptable.) Do the planetoids spin on their axes, like the planets?

The other day, I was visiting the Hayden Planetarium, where they have a couple of huge meteorites—or small planetoids—in the lobby. One of them, the Willmette meteorite, is a large, pitted hunk of nickel-iron weighing fourteen tons, and is the fourth largest "in captivity." The other was unlabelled

and was screened off by wooden panels, not yet on display to the public. My curiosity got the better of me, and I applied an eye to one of the cracks between the boards. It was the Ahnighito meteorite, estimated at 59 tons, the second largest ever found, and the largest in any museum. The largest, the Hoba West sill lies in its pit in Southwest Africa.

Of course, the larger planetoids are much bigger than these masses; Ceres, the largest, is about 478 miles in diameter. Nevertheless, looking at these fallen "stars", one can readily see how it is possible to detect rotation in a body that can just barely be seen in even the most powerful telescopes.

The Ahnighito is about ten feet long and is roughly shaped like a brick with the corners knocked smooth. Imagine it floating in space, and imagine it to be a little bigger—say a hundred miles long. The sun is shining on it, and you're looking at it through a telescope. It looks like a point of light.

Now, the amount of light you'll see depends on which side is facing you. If it's the broad side, it will reflect more light to you than if it were the small end. Now, is it rotating? The way to find out is to attach a light meter to the telescope and take readings. If it's rotating, it will present first one side and then another, and the light intensity will fluctuate. If the planetoids were just about perfectly round, like the planets, that method wouldn't work too well. But most

of them are mountainous, irregular lumps.

The results on the planetoids than have been studied show that they actually are whirling, like the planets.

"Whirling Fragments" is only one chapter out of eleven; the others—"Anatomy of a Comet", "Radio Writes a Record", "The Interplanetary Material", et cetera—all have an interest of their own.

Here, then, is a well-presented body of information about meteors, meteorites, planetoids (asteroids), and comets; their composition, their orbits, and their action in space and (for meteors and meteorites) in the Earth's atmosphere. It is crammed with diagrams of orbital paths and temperature and

albedo variations of the bodies involved. And in the back are sixty-seven plates, showing meteorites, meteorite craters, meteor trails, comets, and so on. Also in the back is an appendix showing "The Relation Between Solar Distance, Interval to Perihelion, and Temperature for Parabolic Orbits".

It is worth noticing that the data herein will be mighty useful for spaceship crewmen; the orbits followed by the more erratic planetoids and the short-period comets are quite similar to the orbits that will have to be followed by an interplanetary vessel in free fall.

This volume, like most of the other Harvard Books on Astronomy, is well worth the admission fee.

Good News!



*The response that you have given to our last couple of issues of **FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION** has justified our heeding the requests of those of you who have urged us to return to a regular schedule. Thus, with Issue Number 31, **FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION** will be a quarterly magazine.*

*Watch for our Winter 1956-57 number, Issue Number 31, it will feature a new complete short novel by **CLIFFORD D. SIMAK**, and short stories by **ROBERT SILVERBERG**, **THOMAS N. SCORTIA**, and many others.*

A thin, shabby-looking kid, looking for invisible people . . .

LOST LOVE

by PAUL JANVIER

(author of "The Peasant Girl")

illustrated by ORBAN

SOMEWHERE just outside Hammonton, Doc Bennett first noticed the boy in the next seat. Doc woke up a little—probably because the bus had just taken a bad bounce—grunted sleepily, opened his eyes, and looked across the aisle. He saw a thin, lank-haired boy sitting with his chin cupped in his palm, staring out into the darkness, and Doc felt a brief flicker of curiosity.

The boy was about fifteen or sixteen, he judged, and thinner than he should be. Shabbier, too, Doc thought, looking at the patched jeans

and threadbare jacket, and the shapeless old farm shoes on his feet.

It gave Doc a turn to notice that the boy wasn't even wearing any socks. The jeans were too short for his long legs, and his dusty ankles were bare and knobby above the shoetops.

Bennett started to take a closer look. Maybe the boy didn't have a shirt on under his jacket, either. But the way the bus was swaying made him sleepy, and he was barely awake anyhow, so even while he was leaning forward, his eyes nodded shut.

In Elwood, the bus stopped for a passenger, and Doc Bennett woke up again. He rubbed his eyes, shifted around on the stiff seat, and scratched his side. Then he noticed the boy across the aisle, who was sitting, looking down at his hands folded in his lap, and Doc thought no boy that age ought to have anything to feel as sad and lost about as this one did. The look on his face was a thousand miles away.

DOC TOOK a better look. The boy was thin — a lot thinner than he should be; and his clothes were in pretty bad repair. He was wearing a pair of old blue



jeans with fuzzy-edged patches over the knees, and his shins stuck out of the bottom of the almost white legs. Lord knew how often the jeans'd been washed to bleach the color so much. And no socks. Doc stared at his knobby, grimy ankles; no socks in November—and a

pair of cracked farm brogans with knotted laces.

"S a y—young fellow..."

The boy raised his head and looked across the aisle. "Yes, sir?" he asked in a soft, polite voice.

Doc didn't know how to go on for a minute. He thought about a way to make the boy

understand he wasn't just a snoop—he guessed the youngster must have run into his share of well-meaning old ladies.

The boy was looking at him with that lost look just behind the politeness in his eyes, waiting patiently.

"Youngster—well, look my name's Doctor Samuel Bennett. This isn't any of my business, but—where're you headed for, dressed like that this time of year?" That wasn't very good, but it was the best he could think of. And he winced and cursed himself for a stumble-tongued old busybody when the boy gave him the answer he'd been afraid of: "I don't have any other clothes, sir."

The boy said it without any trace of embarrassment or bitterness, and that surprised Doc. The youngster was just at the age when it ought to matter very much.

Doc fumbled for the next thing to say. "Well—well, is there anybody waiting for you, where you're going?"

"I don't know sir."

Just like that. "I don't know, sir." Doc Bennett shook his head and frowned, trying to concentrate. He ought to ask the boy's name; maybe he was running away from somewhere. Maybe he

had a good reason, too—a reason that ought to be looked into. The boy looked as though nobody'd ever taken any decent care of him.

But the bus was swaying, and busses always made Bennett sleepy. He tried to keep himself awake, but it was a losing battle. He felt his head droop, and caught a glimpse of a sad, disappointed, but resigned look on the boy's face. And then he fell asleep.

DOC BENNETT woke up in Egg Harbor City, a little surprised because he usually woke up for every stop whenever he traveled anywhere. He must have been more tired than he thought.

He looked around as the bus started to pull out. There weren't very many other passengers on the bus, and most of them were clustered up front. There was nobody sitting toward the back except himself and a boy across the aisle, who was looking at him hopefully.

Doc looked back at the boy, wondering what he wanted.

He was an awfully thin youngster, and dressed in shabby, worn-out clothes that were a lot too small for him and a lot too thin for this kind of weather. Doc frowned at the bare wristbones sticking out of the

boy's windbreaker. No shirt collar showed at his neck, and Doc wondered if the jacket could be all he had on except for his hand-patched jeans.

Doc took a look at the boy's feet. His broken and shapeless shoes were a lot too big for his feet—and he didn't have any socks on.

"Hello," young fellow," he said, hoping the boy wouldn't shy away. He looked sadder and lonelier than any boy Doc had ever seen; he looked as though he was used to more meanness than kindness from people. He looked as though he'd never known a day without a disappointment. In some ways, he looked as though he'd found out what sixty-year-old men, sitting on parked benches in the winter-time with newspapers stuffed into their shirts, had found out.

And no boy should ever have found that out—or even guessed it might be waiting for him.

"Hello, Doctor Bennett," the boy answered politely.

Doc peered at his face. "Well ... I'm sorry, son, but I don't remember your name. Most of my friends call me Doc."

HE COULDN'T remember the boy for the life of

him. He felt ashamed of that—if there was ever anybody he should have remembered, it was this youngster.

"We only met a very short time ... once," the boy said in a sad, haunted voice; "I didn't really think you'd remember me."

Doc shook his head. "I'm sorry, youngster; a doctor sees a lot of people. But I'm not usually this forgetful," he apologized.

The boy nodded.

That was a strange reaction. Doc hitched himself up farther in his seat, and looked more carefully at the boy.

"That's not such practical clothing for this kind of weather," he said awkwardly, taken any decent care of him. "Is somebody meeting you? Where're you bound for?"

"I don't know, Doc."

"You don't know!" Doc sat up straight. Maybe he had an amnesia case here. No—that didn't jibe with the rest of it. What was it? He looked at the boy's cheeks and eyes for traces of fever.

"Don't you have anyplace to go, son?" he asked gently.

The boy shook his head. "No, Doc; not ever. I just travel. Sometimes I have somebody to talk to. Most times I don't. Most times I don't even have that."

"Lord, boy, how long's that been going on?"

The boy shrugged, and all the loneliness in the world was in his eyes. "Three years. Ever since I realized."

"Realized what, son?"

"That I had to find somebody."

"Who?"

The boy shook his head and looked down at the floor.

TOO IMPORTANT, Doc thought. It's too important to talk about. He remembered what it had been like when he was this boy's age.

"Doc?"

"Yes, son?"

"Doc, why don't you remember me?"

Bennett couldn't make sense out of the question. He shook his head. "There's no answer, son; why does anybody forget anything? It just happens, I guess. Can't explain it."

"Haven't you ever seen me before?"

The boy was looking down at the floor, but Doc noticed how tightly his frail hands were knotted together. "No, son," he said gently.

"Are you sure, Doc?"

Bennett didn't know what to do. The boy was strung up as tight as a drawn wire. He felt helpless. "I'm sure, son."

The boy looked up. "Doc—in your practice, do you know of any kids whose parents don't take any care of them?"

Doc thought he'd found his answer. He cursed silently. "No, son, I can't say I do. But you've got to remember that sometimes people *can't* do as much for their children as they'd like to."

The boy shook his head. "I don't mean that," he said in a lost whisper.

Doc hadn't thought he did. He cursed again.

"Listen, son—" He stopped. It was a big step, but made up his mind. "Son, how'd you like to stay with



me for a while, until we can get you straightened out? We'd find you a job after school—I don't suppose you've got any relatives you care for?"

THE BOY bit his lips. He looked down again. "Thanks, Doc," he whispered, "but it wouldn't work. Nobody's going to pay me for work they don't think I did—and, besides, Doc, you can't afford it."

Doc nodded unconsciously. Then he asked: "What makes you think so, son?"

The boy smiled in embarrassment. "You're on a bus. If you were younger, that wouldn't mean anything. But they're two kinds of old doctors that ride busses—the no-good ones and the ones who never charged much."

Bennett flushed uncomfortably; there wasn't any mistaking which kind—the boy thought he was. It wasn't really true—he'd pulled down some big fees in his time.

Not enough, though, he sighed to himself. Not nearly enough. Well, if he had it to do over ... No, not then, either, he admitted.

He flushed again, and in his mind he squinted at himself suspiciously. He didn't like noble people. "You're a pretty quick judge of peo-

ple," he grunted crankily.

"I've studied them, sir."

Yes, by God, I suppose you have, Doc thought. I suppose you had to. "Listen, son—what're you going to do? How're you going to live?"

"I get by, Doc. I shine shoes or I work in a lunch-room—anyplace where I can get tips. It doesn't last very long, any job doesn't, but even with less tips than somebody else would get, I make out."

"My gosh, son, the only place this bus goes to of any size is Atlantic City! And this is November. You won't find much work there."

"I know. But I haven't been up this way before. And I saved up enough in Camden for the ticket."

"Well—you must have learned some trade by now. Don't you have any special skill? Something you could get a regular salary for?"

THE BOY shook his head.

"You only get paid if the boss remembers you." An odd look came over his face. "I've got some...chille. But they wouldn't be fair."

Bennett didn't know what to make of him, he felt completely bewildered. He couldn't make head or tail of what the boy meant by some of the things he was saying.

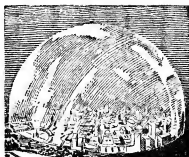
"Doc, I've got to keep moving around; I've got to keep looking. I don't know what else to do."

"Looking for what?" Doc asked again.

"For--for somebody else. For somebody else who's looking for somebody else. For somebody people don't notice. Doc, you know those movies about invisible people? That's who I'm looking for. Invisible people. People who get on busses and have to remind the driver to take their ticket, people who get forgotten. I figure that's the way it's got to be. We're all out—all looking for each other. There can't be very many of us, but there's *got* to be more than just me!" The boy's mouth was trembling, and Bennett felt himself growing frightened for him.

I'm a doctor, he thought. A healer. Something's terribly wrong with this boy.

BUT HE SAT there helplessly, because he didn't know what to do. The best he could think of was talking the boy off the bus and getting him to a psychologist. But how was he going to manage that? He had to think of a way that wouldn't frighten the youngster.



"Sooner or later, Doc, I'm going to find somebody. I don't care what they look like, or who they are, or what they are—they've got to be somewhere in this world!" He slumped down in his seat and whispered: "But suppose we forget each other?"

He looked up. "It would be different if you hadn't set up the rules of this world. If there weren't so many of you—if it hadn't been organized so only you could live in it. But there's no place—nothing—unless we want to fight—unless *I* want to fight—and I don't want to fight—I just want to live—and be happy—I'm one of you—I was—until just a few years ago—and then you all started to forget me—

"Doc, I tried my best. I *tried* to stay one of you. I did. I tried to fit in. But I can't help it. I can't stop it. You forget me. You all forget me—"

But Bennett was falling asleep. He felt his head nodding forward.

The boy's hand clenched tightly over his arm, and for just a moment Doc felt the beat of a pulse like he'd never met before. But he couldn't keep his eyes open.

"Doc! Remember me! Remember me ..."

"**A**B—SECON!" the driver called back. "Absec-on, Mac."

Doc Bennett woke up with a nervous grunt. "Huh?"

"Your stop, Mister."

"o h—o h, thanks," Doc said, climbing out of the seat hastily and reaching up into the rack for his hat. He shook his head to clear it.

He was grumpy with himself as he made his way quickly toward the front of the bus. He usually woke up for every stop whenever he was traveling. Especially on busses.

He banged his hip into the steel corner of a seat and winced. Dammit! he thought crankily, people ought to have armor-plated hides. But then, Evolution probably hadn't heard about human society yet."

"Thanks," he said again as he climbed down the high step and out of the bus, feeling his muscles strain to

make the distance. We ought to have non-rigid skeletons, too, he added, while we're at it.

He waited for the bus to pull away so he could cross the street. Well, he thought with a slight smile, we're a pretty tough lot in our own way. The next thing that comes along better have something pretty fancy in the way of protection.

He looked up and a pale-faced, thin-looking boy was watching him from a window as the bus pulled away.

Doc's smile turned a little sad. The kid looked as though he needed somebody to take care of him.

HE **C**ROSSED the street and walked quickly down the sidestreet toward his home, because the November wind was cold. He climbed up the stairs to the apartment over the grocery and unlocked the door with stiff fingers.

"Sam?"

He closed the door behind him. "Yes, Ruth, I'm home." He felt the ache rising up in his throat again. That young doctor in Camden had asked just a little too much for his practice. It was worth it, but it was more than they had.

Ruth came out of the

kitchen, and he shook his head slowly. "It didn't work out."

She smiled. "So what?"

But he felt the ache grow stronger. He wanted to have things better for her, he always had. But it didn't seem to work out—and he supposed somebody had to take care of the people who couldn't quite work it out when it came to paying medical bills.

Like calling to like, he thought with a twist to his mouth.

"Supper's ready, darling. I hope you weren't too cold."

He shook his head. "Didn't feel a thing." He followed

her into the kitchen and sat down.

"Sam, I—" Ruth stopped and looked over his shoulder. He turned around.

There was a thin, worn-looking girl of about fourteen standing in the other doorway. "You didn't set a place for me, again," she said in a lost, trembling voice.

Doc looked at her in complete bewilderment. And he thought it was odd he didn't recognize her. Despite everything, she was very pretty, and he thought he should—she looked a great deal like Ruth.



NEXT TIME AROUND

At first glance, the cover Ed Emsh has painted for our March issue looks pretty much like the old eternal triangle situation placed in a space setting. Two men fighting, and a girl standing at one side. Uh-huh—only the lads are mixing it up in mid-air; and outside the window, you see Saturn's rings.

It's not quite as it appears to be; the locale is a space station, inside the rings of Saturn, and there are some real knotty gravitational problems—not all of them merely scientific or gadgetty. What the environment does to people has a big part to play in Randall Garrett's "Saturnalia".

Editorial



IT'S MORE THAN JUST TRYING

ONE OF the most common defenses against reader objection to the type of fiction that an editor and publisher offers is, "Well, that's what the public wants; that's what they buy." And if the subject of objection is a top-seller, then the protestor is tacitly accused of innocent ignorance in business matters. After all, fiction is produced to sell; and while it would be nice to make money hand-over-fist selling great literature, one can't ride one's personal preferences right up to the doors of the bankruptcy court, can one? To this, you will hear the counter-charge that the producer often creates a demand through not offering anything better than mediocre fiction, and advertising it as the highest quality possible.

Be that as it may, the science-fiction reader is probably less amenable to producer's manipulation and dictation of his desires than is any other category reader.

Some will claim that this is because the science fiction audience, on the whole, is more intelligent and discriminating—but that is doubtful. A much simpler explanation is that the audience is relatively small and, in general, has a pretty good idea of what it wants. The days when every steady reader who could possibly afford to buy all the magazines did so, and read them all every month, have long gone. My guess is that only a very tiny fraction of science fictionists are interested in reading all the magazines, every issue, even if they have the time and funds.

Generally speaking, the person who finds technical-type science fiction to his taste isn't going to bother with straight-adventure type science fiction. Not even for "relaxation", because this person wants a more cerebrally-active form of relaxation than adventure; for him, technical extrapolation, etc., *is* adventure.

BUT THERE are two classifications of science fictionists who cannot afford to specialize to the extent that most readers do: science fiction authors and science fiction editors. The first need to keep in touch with all types of magazines in the field, (as the spokesman of the Robert Randall team* stated in a recent address) if they hope to make a "comfortable living". And he adds, "But to make a comfortable living at anything, you have to do two things. The first, of course, is to work at it. No matter how good a story-teller you may be, you'll never be a writer unless you write.

"The second precept in any field of endeavor is: Know your field. Hard work won't get you anywhere unless you know what you're doing. A man can beat his brains out laboring over test-tubes and

retorts and balances, but if he doesn't know his chemistry, he isn't a chemist.

"So, in writing science-fiction, it is necessary to study science-fiction. I don't mean just read it—I mean *study* it. You must do more than just study individual stories; you must study the magazines in which they appear. You have to study the field as a whole, not just little bits of it."

The science fiction field is notable, of course, among other things, for the number of its well-known writers who write little or no other kind of fiction, and do not depend upon science fiction for a living. For those who want to make a comfortable living at science fiction writing alone, it goes without saying that each individual market must be studied. The results must then be put into practice so that the author is able to write "top quality" to the taste of each individual editor. I put that "top quality" material means "technical-type" fiction; to another it means "literary type" fiction; to another "adventure", and so on. Some of these definitions will be mutually exclusive for a particular reader. I mean by "top quality" here the highest possible grade of fiction within the limitations of the magazine's

*Garrett, speaking for Randall, at the 1956 Westercon.

policy and/or the editor's personal preferences.

WE HAVE all seen "good technical-type" fiction which may be have been food for superb cerebration, but which was a sad assortment of plot, character, situation, and writing clichés otherwise. We have also seen adventure-type fiction which offered starvation to the grey cells, but was excellently-written and worked out story, with memorable characters. (Since we are dealing with contemporary, rather than historical matters, it wouldn't be cricket to give examples; besides, if you can't supply your own, then you won't know what I am talking about.)

As I've noted before, there doubtlessly have been, and may again be, publishers and/or editors in science fiction who have deliberately set out to produce magazines featuring hackneyed plots, outworn stereotypes for characters, the crudest kind of writing, and the avoidance of ideas except for Sunday Supplement sensationalism—in short collections which these worthies would admit privately were sheer garbage. I do not believe any such are in existence at this writing (August 21, 1956). I don't think any currently practicing editor would return a

story solely on the grounds that it was "too good".

Make no mistake, though: there's a difference between "*too good*" and "*wrong kind of good*". If an editor is committed by company policy to run adventure-type fiction, then any story in which the action is all cerebral or internal, in respect to the characters, however well done, is the "*wrong kind of good*" story. You may read a given magazine and have thereafter a very low opinion of its policy, or of the editor's taste—but that is what it boils down to. Allowing for the story-type standards, what you read was the editor's idea of good stories—or the closest he was able to come to them within the deadline for that issue.

AS SPEAKER GARRETT stated, "You can make all kinds of mistakes—from the sublime to the broadly comical. Maybe you're sitting on the subway one day, and you get an Idea. You begin juggling the Idea around in your head, and it becomes structured; it becomes a Concept.

"Ah!" you chortle happily to yourself. 'This is just the thing for Anthony Boucher.' So you go home, you sit down to the typewriter, you write it up—with slant—and send it to Tony. What happens? It comes back with

an apologetic rejection slip. 'Good story—but I just don't agree with your basic concept.'

"So you send it to Bob Lowndes. It comes back. 'Sorry. I think your basic concept' is fine, but I don't like the way you handled it.'

"And there you see the prime pitfall in slanting.

"Some fans seem to have the idea that you just sit down, write a story, and send it to the highest-paying market. If it comes back, send it to the second-highest, and so on. Well, that may work eventually, but a professional author can't afford to work that way. It takes too much time and postage. Besides, it's a matter of psychology; an editor feels better if he knows you've written *for him*. If he knows you're sympathetic towards his aims and are trying to understand his viewpoint, he becomes more sympathetic toward *your* aims; he tries to understand *you*, and what you are trying to do. Which means, in the long run, that you'll be a better writer for it."

NOW THERE'S a good deal of sound doctrine in the above quotation, but I think it is oversimplified—

*As a more or less unreconstructed Korybskioid, I avoid the term, "concept"; I'd say "basic idea".

and oversimplified in the way too many writers have actually operated, thus producing stories below their actual capabilities. Start with an idea—yes; but the first thing is to consider it at length. This involves research into the soundness of the idea and into the contingent probabilities. Take the trouble to find out what fields of science are impinged upon by your idea, and look to see if you are contradicting anything basic; *then* work out related possibilities (assuming, now, that your idea is a fact and is not an absurd violation of some elementary principles) that will necessarily follow.**

Now, with your background details jotted down, you start thinking about characters—not just writing the story, pulling names out of the air as you go along. Is the gimmick an invention? Very well, then: what kind of person would be likely to invent a dingus of this nature? What would likely be his line? What was his necessary edu-

**Dr. Macklin offers a trenchant example: "If . . . the author says that his hero can walk through walls, he'd better explain why the hero doesn't fall through floors." ("The Two-Way Stretch", *Science Fiction Quarterly*, November 1956.)

cational background—in part, at least; what kind of thought patterns brought the idea for the invention? Then, when these questions are answered—and the process of narrowing down your character has begun—you narrow it down further with: what other general character traits are likely to be found in a person as thus-far outlined? Always *likely to be found*—NOT *are found*. What general kinds of character-conflict, ambivalence, etc., might go along with these traits?

WORKING along these lines, the picture of your lead begins to take form, and then you begin to draw from experience—your own experiences, your personal observations, analogies from history and literature, etc. You start out in a systematic way and continue with system only until there's something solid for your own individual genie to "take over". There's no guarantee that your character will come alive to the reader if you use this system, but the odds will be in your favor more consistently thus than if you sit down and start typing the story out at once.

There's a fortune waiting for whomever can present a writing course with such a guarantee!

And when you have your idea and your character outlined, *then* start on the plot. Part of the plot may have come along with the idea that came to you in the subway; fine. If it's still usable, you're that much farther along. But now is the time, as much as possible, to let your characters take over and demand that the story be plotted thus-and-thus, therefore so, so and so, so and so.

Now however, you're likely to fall smack into the pitfall Robert Randall's mouthpiece warned us about. Before getting up off the couch and into the typing chair (it's traditional that writers do nothing vertically that can possibly be done horizontally—as well as some things that can't) it is time to apply the understanding of editorial aims and personalities that are supposed to come from studying the market (rather than merely reading or glancing over current issues). Understanding includes the realization of the kind of story that an editor really wants, as distinguished from the kind of story you often see published in the magazine. Just as the steadily-producing, frequently-appearing writer will have a minimum standard of competence below which he rarely falls (so far as his published works

go) and will occasionally write a story which he feels is well above his "usual level", an editor will now and then manage to compile an issue of the magazine which is well above his "usual level". In both cases, the principal's evaluation of "usual level" is likely to be lower than that of the steady reader and fan.

Gone are the days when an author could afford to work and rework magazine fiction to the point where he was satisfied that each and every story represented his very best, or when an editor did not have to produce an edition of his magazine until he had exactly what he wanted for each page of it.

UNDERSTANDING, then, consists not in the vague "this is just the thing for Anthony Boucher" (because he uses lots and lots of light sparkling whimsy), which demonstrates only that the person making the conclusion has noticed but not understood. "Light sparkling whimsy" is merely a frame which can be used to say a great deal, to say particular things in a particularly impelling way, or to avoid saying anything at all. The writer who has learned from study, then, will know whether his idea says the sort of thing that

Boucher likes to have said (and this is not too restrictive a matter, since any first-rate editor is catholic in taste). He will be able to choose, with reasonable surety—which is all anyone can hope for—the most apt manner of saying it for this particular story.

And in the process of fragmentation and elaboration which the writer goes through, the construction of one story, aimed at the desires of one market, should lead to other stories for other markets. Sometimes an idea can be worked several different ways before it is explored as thoroughly as one author can plumb it; more often, this is not the case—but frequently something which has to be discarded from one story will be valuable for another.

THIS, THEN, is process of creation which, when successful, results in a "fresh" story—one which will be refreshing to the steady reader and fan, and a new and wonderful experience to the person reading science fiction for the first time. There has been much discussion of this experience, and the Robert Randall address put it as well as has anyone else:

"Something new has been brought before your mind. If you find you like science fic-

tion, you'll love those first stories. You have no previous experience to compare them with; everything in them is fresh a new and dazzling and wonderful. Here are things that don't occur in the ordinary world, things which have never occurred to you before.

"But, as you go on reading, you find that there are certain standard terms, certain basic fundamentals, that are repeated over and over. The first time you read about a ship that goes to the stars, the wonder and glory of such a voyage is overwhelming. By the fortieth time, it's old hat. The first time you vicariously cut down the villain with the ravening energy of a ray pistol, you feel the tremendous surge of power and accomplishment. The fortieth time, it simply seems like an efficient way to get rid of the villain.

"But—and here's the kick—

that first flush of emotion stays with you. Nostalgia sets in. You wish you could get the kick out of the stories the way you did back in the Golden Age.

"But everybody has a different Golden Age."

Ah yes, the old "sense of wonder"! Wonderfulness.

Strange, is it not, that each new generation of science fictionists have, sooner or later, reached the point where they moaned for the old wonderfulness—and all except the eldest spoke happily about stories which the generation before were pointing out as horrible of examples of "what's wrong with science fiction".

IN HIS magnificent play "Murder In the Cathedral", T. S. Eliot has St. Thomas A Beckett say, in response to

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NAME.....

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the First of Four Tempters:

"We do not know very much of the future
Except that from generation to generation
The same things happen again and again.
Men learn little from others' experience.
But in the life of one man, never
The same time returns. ..."

We cannot hope, then, to recapture the old "sense of wonder" or wonderfulness in *the same way* it was when we found it first. But he who looks backward only, setting a Golden Age in yesteryear, has not only lost the capacity to live in the present, but has distorted and falsified the past. The "good old days" were never as good then as they might seem now—we can select the "golden" times and forget the rest.

There is wonderfulness in today's stories, but not the same kind as was found yesterday, nor should it be so. "That sort of thing," Randall stated, "isn't what the public wants these days—if it was, *Science Fiction Plus* would have been more successful."

Yesterday, wonderfulness lay in the magic of great scientific inventions and discoveries; yesterday, wonderfulness lay in the construction of utopias; yesterday,

wonderfulness lay in the revelation of psychotherapeutic panaceas, etc.

Today there is wonderfulness in the application of great scientific inventions and discoveries, which we formerly imagined would make man into little gods, toward the will of the greater God—that we love and understand and help one another; today there is wonderfulness in the acceptance of our society not as a perfection achieved, but as the groundwork on which a "more (nearly) perfect union" can be built as we clear away the weeds; today there is wonderfulness in the utilization of as-yet uncured or incurable pain and suffering for our own maturation, even while science—when not bemused by cure-alls—narrows the area of the incurable.

WE COULD not be in so great danger of annihilation as the fruit of folly, if wisdom had not given us the means—and just as no man can devise any thing which another cannot pervert to



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destruction, no weapon can be devised the principles of which cannot be used to fulfill life and the living.

I feel sorry for those who can see only the ruins of past glory in science fiction (and in anything else, for that matter) as they lament the loss of oldtime wonder and miss the wonderfulness of today.

The writers who have learned are the writers whose stories contain today's wonderfulness, rather than those who seek to disinter yesterday, or who merely "slant" toward a market. To a certain extent, writers and editors can create a demand—but only in the sense of precise shaping. The editor can initiate styles and fashions, rather than follow current styles and fashions as is requisite in other types of magazines. If a particular one doesn't click, or palls rather soon, he has to shift—and the long-lasting editors are adept at that. Staying in one groove too long is as wearing on readers as it is on a

phonograph record; fortunately the science fiction audience is vocal enough to give some kind of hint when a sizeable fraction wants some sort of change.

Robert Randall had some rather nice things to say about your editor, and rather than risk being thought unduly modest, I'll quote them: "The second oldest personality in the field is Robert W. Lowndes, who started editing science fiction late in 1940. The titles and formats of his magazines have changed several times since then, culminating in today's *Future Science Fiction*, (The Original) *Science Fiction Stories*, and *Science Fiction Quarterly*.

"But, as with Campbell's *Astounding Science Fiction* the personality has remained the same, changing only in the sense of developing and increasing awareness of what a particular group of people like to read."



The Unreconstructive M

(continued from page 38)

ishment had successfully carried Tirol past the point of return. Tirol would not be coming back and for that Lantano was thankful. He felt expansive toward Beam; he wished Beam would have something to eat.

Moodily, Beam said: "It's nice here."

"You could have something like this," Lantano said.

On the wall hung a framed folio of ancient paper protected by helium-filled glass. It was the first printing of a poem of Ogden Nash, a collector's item that should have been in a museum. It aroused in Beam a mixed feeling of longing and aversion.

"Yes," Beam said. "I could have this." This, he thought, or Ellen Ackers or the job at Interior or perhaps all three at once. Edward Ackers had been retired on pension and he had given his wife a divorce. Lantano was out of jeopardy. Tirol had been banished. He wondered what he did want.

"You could go a long way," Lantano said sleepily.

"As far as Paul Tirol?"

Lantano chuckled and yawned.

"I wonder if he left any family," Beam said. "Any children." He was thinking about Heimie.

LANTANO reached across the table toward the bowl of fruit. He selected a peach and carefully brushed it against the sleeve of his robe. "Try a peach," he said.

"No thanks," Beam said irritably.

Lantano examined the peach but he did not eat it. The peach was made of wax; the fruit in the bowl was imitation. He was not really as rich as he pretended, and many of the artifacts about the livingroom were fakes. Each time he offered fruit to a visitor he took a calculated risk. Returning the peach to the bowl he leaned back in his chair and sipped his coffee.

If Beam did not have plans at least he had, and with Tirol gone the plans had a better than even chance of working out. He felt peaceful. Someday, he thought, and not too far off, the fruit in the bowl would be real.



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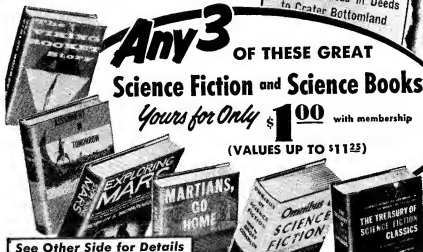
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